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THESEUS.

CHAPTER I.

THESEUS—THE MYSTIC ARMS.

IN the South-eastern part of Argolis, situate on the Saronic Gulf, was the city of Trœzene, under the sway of an old king named Pittheus. It was a small realm to bestow so exalted a title upon its ruler, but in those days there were many petty kingdoms in Greece; for the founding of a city, with encompassing walls and battlements, gave to the founder royal dignity and power. Pittheus was bent beneath the weight of many years, and his reign had been for the most part a peaceful and prosperous one. He had but one child—a daughter—named Æthra, now advanced to the middle age, a woman of exemplary character and many virtues. It was known in Trœzene that Æthra was married; but who her husband was none knew save herself and her father. She came once in every year to visit the home of her birth;

but the presence of her aged parent was not the only thing that led her thither, as we shall shortly see. When she came, she came in a vessel from over the sea, and from the sailors who accompanied her not a word of their lady's secret could be obtained by the curious people of Trœzene. When she went away her bark bore her so swiftly over the waves that none could follow her. Once an unlucky sailor drank too much wine, and talked of the lady to three fishermen who were hauling in their nets near to where the ship was anchored. The sailor and the fishermen were sent for by the king; and they were never seen again by their companions.

Though his daughter lived far away, still Pittheus dwelt not alone. For almost a score of years he had enjoyed the companionship of his grand-child, Theseus, the son of Æthra. While Theseus was yet an infant he had been sent to the court of Pittheus to be reared and educated; and the old king had performed his duty in love and good faith.

The springtime had come, and the vales and hillsides of Argolis were clad in their many-colored vestments of flower and shrub; the husbandman went forth to till the soil, and the hunter bent his bow once more in the deep wood. On a beautiful, bright morning a ship appeared off the coast, and when the anchor had been dropped in the harbor of Trœzene a boat put off in which was a woman whom the people quickly recognized to be the daughter of their king. Pittheus, with a score of attendants, was at the landing to welcome his child, and when he had embraced her, and assured himself that she was well, he led her to his palace, where she partook of refreshment, and then sought a few hours' repose. Towards noon she arose and joined her father in his private apartment.

Æthra was a noble-looking woman, with form and

feature moulded after the kindest type of Grecian beauty, and possessed of sense and intellect that imparted a permanent charm to her face. Age did not impair her loveliness, nor did care draw its lines upon her brow.

"Sweet daughter," spoke the king, "it gives me joy unspeakable to welcome you once more to my court; and it gladdens my heart to see you looking so well. Still, there comes a shadow with your presence, and my joy is tinged with regret."

"How can that be, father?"

"Ah, my child, have you not come to call hence our noble Theseus?"

The bosom of the mother swelled at the mention of that name, and a dewy moisture gathered upon her silken lashes.

"I have come," she said, "to see how he progresses. His own prowess must decide the event of his leaving you."

"I know it," replied the king; "and that is why I am fearful of losing him."

"Is he, then, so proficient?" asked Æthra, tremulously.

"Aye," answered Pittheus, "he is a prodigy of wisdom, and his prowess exceeds that of all the youths of Argolis. He is lord of the forest, and the sharp-clawed beasts of prey flee at his approach. At the last Olympian festival he bore away the palm; and I doubt if there is now a man in all Peloponnesus who would dare to stand single-handed before him."

"Enough, my father," cried the mother. "Let me see him."

"And will it give you joy, my daughter, if Theseus is found qualified to leave my court?"

A shadow rested upon the face of Æthra.

"No, my father," she replied, slowly and solemnly. "Could my wishes be the rule and guide of his life, he would not leave this safe retreat; but the gods will it otherwise. We must obey."

"You speak truly, Æthra. It is not for us to question. I will summon him."

Thereupon Pittheus called one of his attendants, and directed that Theseus should be sent to the royal apartment.

In a little while the door of the chamber was opened, and Theseus entered. He was in the first bloom of opening manhood, with the flush of health resting in the tints of the rose and the lily upon his handsome face. He was tall and symmetrical, with limbs well rounded; and his movements betokened a wondrous power of frame. The closely curling raven hair did not hide the grand form of the head; and as he stood in the presence of his mother, with the warmth of devoted love casting a new glow upon his face, he combined in one person the beauty of Adonis with the power of Hercules.

"Theseus," spoke the king, "behold your mother."

But it needed not the address of Pittheus. The youth had recognized the sweet face, and even while the king spake he had hurried forward and rested his head upon the bosom whence his infant nourishment had been drawn.

Half an hour was spent in such conversation as was suggested by the meeting, and then succeeded a period of silence. Pittheus and Æthra seemed inclined to avoid what must follow, but not so Theseus.

"My mother," he cried, when he found that he must open the subject, "do you know that I have now reached the estate of manhood. If my grandfather hath kept the reckoning correctly the seasons have succeeded

each other in their rule over the land one-and-twenty times since I was born. Is it not so?"

"It is true as you have spoken, my son."

"Doth my father live?"

"He does."

"Then tell me where I may seek him."

The mother shook her head.

"How," exclaimed Theseus, "am I not yet to know my father? Whence this barrier to my soul's desire?" The old king and his daughter regarded each other for a few moments in silence; but at length Æthra spoke:

"My son, be not too eager to exchange this abode of peace and quiet for the turmoil and dangers which may beset thee when thou seekest a new abode."

"Am I a toying child? Am I a weak girl?" cried the youth, his broad bosom swelling, and his dark eyes flashing with Hesperian light. "Have I been all these years devoting my energies to the cultivation of my mind, and the strengthening of my limbs, only to pass the rest of my days in idleness and sloth? Know ye, my mother, that trials and dangers are the things I seek. Show me my father and tell me of his enemies, and this arm shall smite them from the face of the earth. Keep me no longer in the dark. If there is no work for me to do by the decree of those who are responsible for my being, then I will seek adventure on my own account."

"My noble son," spoke Æthra, with deep solemnity, "there is work for you to do; there are adventures before you; and there are dangers too. Pardon the tender solicitude of a mother's love, if you think I have seemed anxious to hold you back."

"Pardon me, gentle mother, if I have spoken harshly. But I feel that I have something more to do than to rust away in Trœzene."

Æthra turned and spoke with her father, and then she said to her son :

"It remains with you, Theseus, to decide what shall be in the future. In half an hour from this time you will go with me to the valley of Syros, where the decision must be made."

"Shall I take my companions with me?"

"Who are they?"

"I have but two—Clio, the Athenian armorer, and Cassander, of Argos. They are brave men and true, and have borne me company in all my wanderings for several years."

"They may go with you, my son."

Theseus saluted his mother with another kiss, and then withdrew from the apartment. In the court he found the two companions of whom he had spoken. Clio, the Athenian, was not more than thirty years of age. He was heavier than Theseus, but lacked the beautiful symmetry and muscular elasticity of the latter. Cassander, of Argos, was a few years older than Clio, and not quite so large. They were both bold, brave men, and could hurl the javelin and point the sword with fatal precision. They had been selected by Pittheus as companions for his grandson, and their office had been to keep him in practice with such weapons as warriors and hunters used. They had been true to the trust reposed in them, and between them and the youth had grown up a love as strong as life itself.

"Now, my brave brothers," cried Theseus, "the hour is at hand in which I am to know what lieth before me. My mother will shortly lead me to the valley of Syros, and you are to go with me. What say you to it?"

They both clapped their hands with joy, for they saw adventure in the circumstance. They were ready to go to the ends of the earth with their master.

In due time Æthra appeared in the court, attended by her father, and one Ethiopian slave ; and very soon the party set out upon their mission. The way was to the westward from the city, and at the distance of half a league they entered a thick wood. A huge wild boar sprang out upon them as they threaded the deep forest and Æthra came nigh swooning with terror ; but Theseus, ever on his guard, snatched a javelin from his back, and hurled it with such force and precision that it pierced the boar through and through. Clio and Cassander had made no movement against the beast, for when they saw that their master was armed they knew that their help would not be needed. They marked the spot where the boar might be found by the king's servants, and then continued on their way.

The valley of Syros was distant two leagues from Trœzene, and through it ran a small river. Upon one hand was a long hill covered with wood, while upon the other arose an abrupt precipice of jagged rock. Æthra led the way until she had reached the middle of the valley, where she stopped before a large flat stone which seemed to be half buried in the earth.

"My son," she said, "what one man can lift this stone from its resting-place ?"

"Must it be so lifted ?" inquired Clio.

"It must," was Æthra's answer.

"Then let me try."

Thus speaking, the Athenian cleared a place for his hands beneath the edge of the stone, and then applied himself to the task. He put forth all his strength, straining till every muscle had done its utmost ; but the stone did not move.

Next Cassander bent to the work ; but the stone retained its place as though it had been a fixed part of the solid earth.

"No mortal can lift that stone," he said, as he leaned back to regain his exhausted breath.

A hopeful light beamed upon Æthra's face, and turning to her father she whispered what was in her mind. The old king shook his head.

"You have not yet seen your son put forth his strength. Common men are as infants compared with him."

"Shall I lift the stone?" asked Theseus.

"You will do so if you can," replied his mother.

He stooped and placed his hands where Clio and Cassander had placed theirs. The cords of his arms and shoulders and neck swelled like ropes, and presently the stone left its hold upon the earth, and with one mighty heave he lifted the ponderous mass and threw it entirely over. As he looked upon the spot where the stone had rested, he beheld an iron chest, with the key in the lock. He turned to his mother, to know what further he should do.

"The contents of the chest are yours," she said. "Open it, and secure the prize."

With trembling hand Theseus turned the key and threw back the cover of the chest, and within he found a sword and a pair of sandals. He took them out and examined them. The sandals were of gold, with straps of crimson leather thickly studded with pearls and precious stones. The sword was long and heavy, but he handled it as though it had been of lightest wood. The scabbard was of purest gold, richly carved, and bore upon its sides strange characters which he could not understand. The hilt and guard were formed by the curious twining together of two serpents—one of gold and the other of silver. The mouth of the silver serpent held the blade, while the head of the gold serpent formed the pommel, holding in its open jaws a car-

buncle of large size and rare brilliancy. As Theseus drew forth the blade, his eyes were dazzled by its brightness. He tried the edge and point, and found them so sharp that the slightest touch left a mark upon the skin of his thumb.

"My son," said Æthra, "that sword was your father's. Its mate is not to be found this side of Mount Olympus. The sandals were also his. He buried them here when you were an infant, and his mandate was, that when you were able to lift away the stone which he with his own hands had placed over them, you would be fit to wield the one and wear the other. Take them, and return with me to Trœzene, and there we will decide what the next step shall be."

"Am I now to seek my father?" asked the youth.

"Yes," replied his mother. "But," she added, shaking her head, "think not that you are to tread a path of roses."

"I ask no such path," cried Theseus. "With this trenchant blade I can carve my way through forests and through mountains. Point me to the way, and let me go."

Æthra trembled, and another shadow rested upon her face. She knew that her son was brave and strong, and she knew, too, that these very qualities would lead him into many dangers. Without speaking further, she turned from the place of the empty chest and moved back toward the city, conversing on the way with her father while Theseus and his companions followed at a respectful distance. When they reached the palace the lady retired to her own chamber and the king called his grandson to his closet.

"You are not yet wholly armed," said Pittheus. "You have the sword and the sandals of your father, but you have not yet his buckler. This latter arm has been in

my keeping since you were born, and I will now deliver it to you."

Thus speaking, the old king left the closet, and when he returned he bore upon his arm a buckler of burnished steel, inlaid with gold and precious stones.

"You would scarcely think," he said, as he turned the polished surface toward the light, "that hard blows from sharp swords had been laid upon this buckler; but such is the fact. These weapons were brought from Egypt by an old armorer whose life was saved by your father's father. He had spent many years in perfecting his art, and the result was the production of two swords and two bucklers. One of the swords and one buckler fell into the hands of Minos, king of Crete, and the others came into the possession of your grandfather. There may be magic power in these arms, for the old Egyptian professed to be a magician, and he declared that he had received the assistance of the gods in their manufacture. But I would advise you not to trust much in such a tale. Be assured that you possess weapons which cannot be excelled by mortal handiwork, and beyond that let your hopes find rest in your own wisdom and prowess. If the gods see fit to smile upon you, so be it; but be sure that you have earned their favor before you presume thereupon. It is now late, my son, and I must seek my officers before I retire. Rest you until morning, and then you shall receive further directions."

Theseus would have asked his grandfather many questions, but he knew that the old king had business to attend to, so he withdrew without further remark. When he reached his own apartment, he examined more carefully the arms which he had obtained in so wonderful a manner. The sword was truly a marvel. It balanced in his hand as though nature had fashioned it on

purpose for him. A silken thread which hung suspended from one of the curtains, he severed at a stroke; and then, to prove its temper, he struck at the blade of the sword he had been wont to carry. He struck once—he struck twice. At the third stroke, which was delivered with more confidence, he smote the blade of the old weapon in twain, and when the feat had been accomplished he found not so much as a mark to show where the contact had come upon the keen edge of his new-found blade. Then he examined the buckler, and balanced it upon his arm. Had he searched the wide world through, he could not have found one that, in form, and size, and weight, could have suited him better. He placed it against the wall, and hurled a dozen steel-pointed javelins full upon its surface, and they did not leave a dent to mark the places where their points had been turned and battered!

Happy Theseus! He kissed the priceless weapons as a lover might have kissed his mistress! and when he retired he placed them beneath his pillow.

Theseus slept soundly and sweetly; but not so Æthra. She spent most of the night in prayer, beseeching the gods to look down kindly upon her son, and to lead him safely through the dangers which beset the path that was opening before him.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST ADVENTURE.

On the following morning Theseus was up betimes, and having taken a turn in the forest with Clio and Cassander, and eaten his breakfast, he was ready to answer the summons of his mother. He found her

with the King, and when he saw them together, he knew from their bearing that they had been conversing about himself. As he approached to salute his parent he thought she looked pale, and that her lips were quivering. He embraced her and tenderly asked if she were ailing. Pittheus answered for her :

"I fear," he said, "that your mother hath some serious sickness upon her. Should her illness detain her at my court our plans may be somewhat changed. You will wait until later in the day, and then we may arrive at some definite conclusion."

"But in the meantime," said Æthra, "you may be making your preparations for departure ; for, whether I go or not, you must not be detained longer in Argolis."

Theseus withdrew from the chamber, and having once more sought Clio and Cassander, he set about making preparations for his journey. Of course he meant that these two faithful men should bear him company, and he directed them to select for their own use the most serviceable weapons they could find. In selecting the javelins he exercised his own judgment, though he called upon his companions to express their opinions touching his choice.

Shortly after noon Theseus was sent for again, and this time he found his mother upon her couch, unable to arise. A burning fever was in her veins, and her brow was hot and parched. The physicians had been with her, and it was their opinion that it might be several weeks before she could venture forth upon her return to her husband.

"Dear Theseus," she said, raising herself to her elbow, "I grieve that you must go alone to seek your father."

"I grieve that you are sick, dear mother," the son replied ; "but let there be no grief on my account."

I shall not go forth alone. Clio and Cassander will go with me, and their companionship will be all sufficient. Yet, my mother, if I can be of assistance to you here, or if my presence will lighten the gloom of your sick chamber, I will curb my desires and wait with pleasure."

"No, my son,—it cannot be. You must away at once. Were the decision left with me I might call upon you to stop; but I have not the right. You must go from here to Athens, where you will search out Orestes the silversmith. He is an old man, and well known in Athens."

"Is he my father?" asked Theseus eagerly.

Æthra lay back upon her pillow, and after a short silence, she said:

"Do not press me, my son, with questions. As I have already told you, were I left to my own wishes I might answer you fully all you wished to know; but such is not the case. I am commanded not to tell you who your father is, and perhaps it is best that you should not know until you are safe within the house of the silversmith. The directions which I have to give are very simple. You are to make your way to Athens, there to seek Orestes, and from him to gain further instruction. Your grandfather will be best able to give you directions touching your route. He will either furnish you with a ship, or you may take the one in which I came."

Theseus would gladly have spent more time with his mother, but he saw that it pained her to talk, so he kissed her upon the cheek and then withdrew. He found his grandfather alone, to whom he related what had just passed.

"I am going to Athens, the city of cities," he said, "where I am to seek Orestes, the silversmith, who will give me further directions. My mother said that you would give me information touching my route."

"I will do so."

"And, perhaps," added the youth, "you can tell me something concerning my father."

"No," said Pittheus, shaking his head; "that is beyond my province. I can only tell you how to reach Athens."

"Then," returned Theseus, "I fear I shall not need your counsel, for the route is well known to Clio."

"How, my son," cried the king, in amazement; "do you think of going to Athens by land?"

"Certainly. I will take my way over the Corinthian Isthmus."

"No, no, Theseus—that will never do. You must go across the Saronic Gulf. You can have a good ship and an able crew. The Isthmus of Corinth is beset by many dangers."

"Dangers are what I seek, sire."

"But the dangers of that passage are such as you dream not of. Robbers infest the mountain fastnesses, and wild beasts of every degree roam through the forests."

"So much the better," said Theseus, confidently. "I will slay the robbers, and the wild beasts shall crouch at my feet."

"But, my boy, there are giants in those mountains—giants before whom no mortal can stand. Consider, I implore you, and do not expose yourself needlessly."

"I have considered enough, sire; and I am determined to make my way by land. I fear no mortal power; and if powers immortal are leagued against me, I should be no safer upon the sea than upon the land. So let that matter rest. When I go, I go by the Isthmus of Corinth. What further have you to say?"

Pittheus labored long with his grandson to induce him to take the safer route by sea; but to no avail.

The youth was bound to seek adventure, and those very obstacles which the old King pointed out served only as so many inducements to the daring spirit. Finally the royal guardian was forced to yield, though he did so with much reluctance.

That night Theseus went in to see his mother, and, after spending an hour by her bedside, he bade her farewell. She kissed him and blessed him, and hoped that she might meet him in Athens ere many weeks had passed. She said nothing to him touching the route he was to take, for she supposed that he would of course cross the Saronic Gulf, and therefore it only remained for her father to furnish a vessel. Theseus was also silent upon that point, for he knew that his mother would strongly oppose his contemplated plan, and he did not wish to be called upon to withstand her entreaties. He left her with the belief that she would soon recover, as he had received assurance from the physician to that effect.

On the next morning, bright and early, Theseus and his two companions were ready to set forth. Pittheus would have accompanied them part way on their journey, but they did not desire it. He offered to send a guard with them, but this, also, they declined.

"Ah, my son," said the old King, with a sad shake of the head, "you know not what dangers you are courting. It is not too late yet to reconsider."

Theseus laughed as he spoke his reply, and, having once more embraced the kind old man, he turned from the court and was ere long clear of the city. The golden sandals were upon his feet, and so lightly and buoyantly did he step over the way that he supposed there must be some magic virtue in them.

"I feel as though I trod on air," he said.

"So you generally feel," returned Clio.

"Aye," added Theseus; "but these sandals surely give new elasticity to my step."

"Because," rejoined the thoughtful Athenian, "you know that they were your father's."

"Perhaps you are right, good Clio."

Before noon the adventurers had left the city of Trœzene far behind them, and when Night spread her curtain over the earth, they had reached the confines of a deep, dark forest, where they had hunted many times. Beneath a canopy of thick branches they built a fire, and cooked a brace of birds which Cassander had shot; and having eaten supper, they lay down upon a bed of soft moss and slept.

Just as the day was breaking Theseus was aroused by a strange noise near at hand, and upon starting up he beheld a wild boar, not many yards distant, just ready to spring upon him.

"Thus do the fates send us food," he cried, as he sprang to his feet and seized a javelin. He hurled the weapon with an aim so sure that the beast's heart was pierced through and through; and when Clio and Cassander awoke and saw what had been done, they straightway built a fire, and having selected some of the tenderest pieces of the boar's carcass they prepared breakfast.

All that day they traveled through the forest and when evening drew nigh again they came to a hamlet upon the sea-shore, where dwelt a number of fishermen; and with an old man named Dadmus they found lodgings for the night. In the morning Dadmus asked them whither they were traveling.

"We are going into Attica," replied Theseus.

"Where is your ship?" pursued the fisherman.

"We have no ship, good sir. We are going by land."

"Ah, my son, that cannot be. The only piece of land between this country and Attica is the Isthmus of

Corinth ; and surely you would not dare the dangers of that passage."

The youth smilingly asked why not.

"Because," replied the old man, "the dangers of that dark place are such as no mortal can overcome. You had better try to pass over the throned summit of Mount Olympus. In the deep forest of the Isthmus dwell monsters of such horrid shape and marvelous strength that even the gods themselves shudder as they pass over the gloomy depths. I beseech you, young sir, go no farther than Corinth by land. In that city you will find passage by vessel, either across the Saronic Gulf or across the Gulf of Corinth."

At this point Clio plucked his master by the mantle, and drew him out from the fisherman's hut.

"I have a message for you," he said, "which your grandfather bade me deliver to you after we had passed the forest which we have left behind us." And thus speaking he handed to Theseus a small roll of parchment, tied with a silken cord.

"Why did he not deliver it himself?" asked the youth as he took the roll and cut the string.

"Because he wished you to ask him no questions," replied Clio.

Theseus opened the parchment and read as follows :

"THESUS *will on no account go within sight of Corinth. His whole future of usefulness may depend upon his passing that city undiscovered.* PITTHEUS."

"But," said our hero, after he had read the scroll, "how can we obey this? The walls of Corinth face both seas, and there is no passage beyond the reach of her eyes."

"There are two ways in which we can obey the

injunction," said the Athenian. "We can pass Corinth by night; or we can take a boat and pass it by water."

"We will pass it by night," declared Theseus. "I have said that I would make the passage by land, and so it shall be. How far lies Corinth from this place?"

"I think it is some eight leagues."

"Just the distance that it should be. We will give that city a place behind us before another morning."

When Theseus had rewarded Dadmus for his kindness the old man once more sought to turn him from his purpose of crossing the Isthmus; but our hero did not stop to listen. He hastened away with his companions, and toward the close of the day the walls of Corinth were in sight. He waited in a thick grove until the darkness of night had settled over the plain, and then he set forward again.

"I have chosen to obey the injunction of my grandfather," he said, as he walked along by the sea-shore; "but yet I cannot comprehend the meaning of this extraordinary caution. What harm can come to me in such a city?"

"I should judge," replied Clio, "that the chief object was to prevent your approach being known in Athens."

"And how does that lighten the matter? Why should my entrance into Attica be so carefully concealed?"

Clio shook his head. He could tell nothing about it.

"It matters not," continued Theseus. "We will move on, and trust fate for the result. As for open danger I fear it not; and if there is hidden danger from the plottings of secret foes, the right must bear me up."

Before midnight the party had passed Corinth in safety, and within the shelter of the deep forest beyond

they lay down to take a few hours' repose. The sun was up when Theseus awoke, and having called his companions and eaten his breakfast, he set forward again.

The way was now through thick woods, and as they came to the point where the Isthmus widened they found upon their left hand a chain of high mountains. Late in the afternoon while the sun was hanging upon the tree-tops, Theseus observed a huge structure like a palace, standing directly in his path. The walls were of massive stone, with towers and battlements, and the roof of the dwelling-place was of some shining metal.

"Mercy!" cried Clio, when he saw this huge fabric. "Here is an obstacle such as I had not counted upon. If we find enemies here I fear our progress is stayed."

"Not so," said Theseus. "Let not the first obstacle daunt us. Do you go forward, Cassander, and demand to know who inhabits this place."

But Cassander had no need to obey, for hardly had Theseus spoken when the huge gate was flung open, and a man of gigantic stature stepped forth. He was clad in burnished steel from his throat to his knees, and in his right hand he carried a sword of ponderous weight, while upon his left arm he bore a buckler larger than a chariot wheel.

"Who art thou that thus bravest the passage of the Corinthian Isthmus?" he asked, in a voice of thunder.

"I am one to whom the breath of heaven is free," replied our hero, proudly. "Who art thou?"

"I am Procrustes," said the giant; and then he watched to see the youth tremble and turn pale. But he was disappointed in this, though Clio and Cassander exhibited signs of fear.

"Ah!" exclaimed Clio, "we are surely undone! This is the monster who has the iron bedstead to which he

fits the bodies of all his victims. If the prisoner is too short his body is stretched with pulleys ; and if it is too long, the extremities are lopped off. Let us turn back."

"Not so," said Theseus ; and as he spoke, he drew his sword and faced the giant.

Procrustes laughed scornfully.

"Poor worm, do you dare my vengeance !"

"Aye," cried our hero ; "and I challenge thee to single combat."

"Now by the throne of high Olympus," exclaimed the giant, brandishing his huge sword, and moving forward, "thy temerity has cost thee thy life. Thou shalt not live to sleep upon my iron bed !"

Theseus bore his buckler firmly upon his arm and grasped his sword with calm decision. Procrustes advanced, shaking the ground at every step, and when he had gained a proper distance, he aimed a blow at the youth's head, intending to cleave his body in halves ; but the son of Æthra was on his guard. With his buckler he caught the descending blade and turned it harmlessly off ; and then, before the giant could recover himself, he smote him upon the sword arm so severely that the limb was utterly powerless. With a yell of pain and rage that made the solid earth quake Procrustes dropped his buckler and took his sword in his left hand.

"Die !" he shouted, springing forward, and aiming another blow at the youth.

But the ponderous weapon only cleaved the empty air, for Theseus nimbly slipped aside, and while the giant was recovering himself he plunged his keen blade into the arm-pit of the monster, driving it clean through the body. With a heavy groan, Procrustes fell forward upon his face, and immediately expired. Theseus wiped the blood carefully from his sword, and then turning to his companions he said :

"Thus do I find the first use for the priceless weapon which my father left for me; and may the gods ordain that in the time to come I shall be equally fortunate. And now, my friends, before the light of day is wholly gone, let us search this giant's palace. We may find something to do within these solid chambers."

Thus speaking, Theseus led the way, followed closely by Clio and Cassander. They entered at the gate, and crossed a court paved with blocks of rough marble, beyond which they found unobstructed access to the giant's dwelling. In the lower apartments they found much coarse food, and great heaps of merchandize which had been taken from merchants who had unfortunately sought their way across the isthmus. The sight of several iron chests securely locked reminded Theseus that he had noticed a bunch of keys hanging at the girdle of the giant, and while he overhauled some of the rich silken stuffs he sent Clio out after them. When the keys were brought the chests were opened, and found to contain gold and silver and precious stones—a store of wealth which they could not count. Clio and Cassander took as much of the gold as they could conveniently carry, while Theseus contented himself with a few of the rarest jewels.

In a vaulted chamber, to which the light was admitted through an aperture at the top, they found a bedstead formed of massive bars of iron, with rollers at the head and foot; and upon it was a man in the last agonies of death. Theseus quickly cut the cords that bound him to the fatal rack; but they came too late, for the poor man breathed his last as they were lifting him from the frame. When they had laid the corse upon the floor the day had become so far spent that objects were no longer discernible in the palace, and Theseus decided that they would suspend further

search until morning. They prepared supper in the giant's kitchen, and as our hero sat down to the meal he felt well satisfied with the work he had done; and when he retired to rest he called upon the gods with renewed faith.

CHAPTER III.

THE IRON CLUB.

When the morning dawned Theseus awoke and found Clio already preparing breakfast. After the meal had been eaten Cassander said that he fancied he had heard sounds issuing from some place under the palace. He had been out into some of the passages while Clio had been busy over the fire, and the sounds, like groans of human beings, had seemed to come up from the bowels of the earth. Theseus took the keys and soon found a door which opened to a descending flight of steps. Down these he went; but when he reached the bottom he found it so dark that he was forced to send Cassander back for a torch. While his follower was gone he distinctly heard deep groans issuing from some place not far distant, and he had no doubt that they were the notes of prisoners whom the giant had captured. When Cassander returned he bore a flaming torch, and the door of the dungeon whence the groans came was soon found. A key was selected that fitted the lock, and as the iron door was thrown open our hero beheld a sight that made him shudder.

There were fifteen human beings in the damp, cold dungeon, all of them entirely naked, save such covering as was formed of the dirt and filth of the noisome place. At first the light of the torch so dazzled the

eyes of the poor creatures that they could not see who had come to them ; and, supposing it to be their dreadful persecutor, they fell upon their wasted knees and begged for mercy.

"Up, up!" cried Theseus. "I am your deliverer. The giant Procrustes is dead, and you are free."

The wretched beings could hardly credit the evidence of their senses ; but in a little while, when their eyes became used to the light, they distinguished the handsome face of the youthful hero, and then they began to believe what they had heard, and many of them sank down again upon their knees, this time to offer praise and thanks to their deliverer.

Some of the prisoners were unable to walk, but they were all finally helped to the light and airy apartments overhead, where plenty of clothing was found for them ; and while Clio and Cassander busied themselves in preparing food, Theseus sat down and listened to the story of the sufferers. They were all merchants, and had been captured and robbed by the giant at different times.

"My name is Ostrus," said one who appeared stronger than his companions, "and I belong in Corinth. I was sailing from Argos, and our ship was driven upon this coast by a storm, when the giant attacked us, killing all the crew, and making prisoners of us who owned the venture. These other men are also merchants,—some from Corinth, some from Argos, and some from different cities in Attica. There were twenty of us in the dungeon a few days ago, but five of our number have been taken away to rest upon a fatal iron bed which the monster has kept somewhere in his dread abode. I think my turn would have come next. But, kind sir, you have saved me, and such reward as I cannot return I must beseech the gods to give you,"

Theseus listened to the different stories until his companions had prepared sufficient refreshment, and then, with his own hands, he assisted in helping the famishing ones. After they had satisfied their hunger he took them out and showed them the dead carcass of their enemy, which sight seemed to give them new strength.

"Now" said our hero, when he had done all that he could, "I must leave you to yourselves. Between here and Corinth there's no more danger. You are all merchants, and I trust that you are all honorable men. At any rate, a common suffering, and a common deliverance, should make you honorable one toward another. In this palace is immense wealth, for which I and my companions have no use and no desire. Much of it is probably already by right your own, and the rest I shall leave at your disposal. Take it; divide it fairly; and make such use of it as shall add new blessings to your lives. Remember the poor, and when you offer up your sacrifices to the gods forget not him who rescued you from the jaws of death."

The merchants desired to know the name of their deliverer; but in this he could not gratify them.

"It is all the same," he said. "The gods will know for whom your offerings are made."

They promised that they would remember him always; and they furthermore promised that the wealth which had fallen to them in so marvelous a manner should be honorably and equitably divided.

Theseus could do no more for them, and having given them directions to bury the body of the giant, he set forth again on his journey. Late in the afternoon he reached a point where the road swept down to the shore of the sea, and here he found some fishermen just drawing in their nets, who, when they saw him, dropped their ropes and fled in terror toward their boat. He

stopped them, however, and soon made them understand that he meant them no harm ; and he even went so far as to help them draw in their nets, after which he took some of the fish and had them cooked for his supper. When the day was gone, and Hesperus had led forth the stars beneath the eye of Night, he sat with the fishermen by the blazing fire, and listened to their stories of adventure upon the sea, and in return he told to them stories of heroic deeds upon the land.

In the morning the fishermen offered to take Theseus and his companions in their boats ; but he told them that he had no need of the help they so kindly offered.

"But," said the leader of the crew, "you cannot, from this place, travel either way in safety. If you go to Corinth, you will meet the giant Procrustes, who, if you survive his sword, will surely kill you upon his terrible iron bed."

"If you wish to go hence to Corinth by land," replied Theseus, "be assured you may do so in safety, for Procrustes is dead. I slew him yesterday with my own hand, and set free all the prisoners he had confined in his drear abode."

At first the fishermen were not inclined to believe this wonderful story ; but when Theseus produced the sword which he had taken from the giant, and which Clio had brought away, they were convinced.

"Still," said the chief of the fishermen—a man well advanced in years—"you have not swept away all danger. If I judge rightly, you are bound toward Attica."

Theseus replied that he was.

"Then," pursued the fisherman, "you are in greater danger than any you have yet encountered. Not many leagues to the east of this place, and close by the road which you must travel, dwells a monster, in human

form, named Periphetes. He is far more terrible in his gigantic powers and brutal disposition than was Procrustes. He is always armed with an iron club, so ponderous that no ordinary man can lift it, with which he kills all who come in his way. He spares neither age nor sex, and the court of his dark abode is entirely paved with human bones. Ah, my dear youth, let me counsel you. Tempt not the unconquerable power and wrath of this ugly Titan. I will take you to the shores of Attica, and land you in safety."

Clio and Cassander joined the fisherman in his prayer.

"Why,—how is this?" cried our hero, turning toward his companions. "Are you afraid? If it so be, I give you full permission to retrace your steps."

"My dear master," said the Athenian, "you mistake. For ourselves we care not at all; but for you our hearts are ill at ease. I know that the things whereof the fisherman has told us are true. I have heard often of the monster Periphetes, and I think no mortal arm can overcome him. And, moreover, our way will be shorter by water."

"My good Clio," replied the youth, arising to his feet, and drawing his sword-belt more tightly around him, "if you fear only for me, let your fears be at rest. I am ready now to set forth."

Both Clio and Cassander knew that further expostulation would be useless, so they prepared to follow their master. The fishermen were amazed when they saw the young man determined to brave the danger they had pointed out: and they were fully persuaded that the bones of himself and his companions would soon be added to the ghastly pavement of the court of Periphetes' palace.

But no such fears engaged the thoughts of Theseus.

He set forth with a light, buoyant step, and ere long he had so infused his spirit into his companions that they, for the time, lost all apprehension of trouble. At noon they reached a spring of pure, sparkling water, and beneath the shade of wide-spreading olives they sat down to their dinner. In the afternoon Clio slew a wild boar, which furnished meat for supper. The night was spent in a deep vale, within sound of the beating waves of the sea, where thick foliage afforded sufficient shelter. In the morning, as soon as the sun was up, they started on again, and toward the middle of the forenoon they were startled by the sound of a horse's step, and while they stood listening they saw a horseman coming toward them at a furious pace, and would evidently have passed them without stopping had they not placed themselves directly in his way.

"In mercy's name, good gentlemen," cried the rider, "I implore you, do me no harm. I am an unfortunate man, fleeing from death." As he spoke he reined in his foaming steed, and as the animal came to a standstill he seemed ready to drop from exhaustion. The stranger was sorely distressed with fright; his garments were torn and his flesh lacerated, and his long hair floated wildly in the wind.

"We mean you no harm," said Theseus, kindly. "We only wish to know why you ride so hotly through the forest."

"Alas, kind gentlemen," replied the stranger, "if you are of human mould, then turn and fly with me. Two leagues back from here I left the most horrible monster that the earth ever bore upon its bosom. I had six companions and he slew them all. The fleetness of my horse brought me in safety away."

"Have you met the monster Periphetes?" demanded our hero.

"Yes, fair sir; and a more terrible being I never conceived of. His iron club marks the earth with deep seams wherever his blows fall."

Theseus cared not to question the man further, as he was anxious to meet Periphetes; so he directed him how he might reach Corinth in safety, and then dismissed him.

Half an hour after this Theseus and his companions stopped for dinner, and while they ate, the youth fancied that Clio and Cassander trembled.

"Hearken unto me," he said, after he had finished his meal. "If you are afraid, remain here, while I go on and meet the monster alone. I would not draw you into danger which you shun."

But they both protested that they were not afraid. If they had misgivings, it was only for their master.

Theseus laughed at the thought of danger to himself; and as they once more went on their way, he related to them marvelous stories of the deeds of immortal heroes

They had reached the summit of a gentle hill, where our hero had stopped to wipe the perspiration from his brow, when Clio discovered the walls of a palace rising above the trees, at no great distance ahead.

"It is the abode of Periphetes," he said, in a whisper.

The soul of Theseus was fired in an instant.

"I think you speak truly, Clio," he exclaimed, at the same time unslinging his buckler from his back. "When Hesperus leads forth his starry host to-night, the Corinthian Isthmus shall be freed from the presence of the dread monster, or the fair Æthra shall be childless. Follow me, and let not our eyes be turned behind us until all danger is swept from our path."

Thus speaking, Theseus started forward, and ere long he reached the open space before the palace. The structure was of gray stone, with walls of great height,

and seemed fit to withstand the assault of an army. Upon approaching nearer, our hero beheld upon the ground, where the sward was reddened with gore, a number of human bodies, mangled and crushed in a most horrid manner. At the sight of this dreadful scene he drew his sword, and, in a loud tone, demanded to know who had done this thing. The answer to his demand was a Tartarian roar, and in a few seconds more Periphetes presented himself. He was indeed a monster to behold. In height he towered above ordinary men as men tower above suckling babes ; in breadth of shoulders and span of limb he was like the wild elephant. His eyes were of a fiery red color, burning like coals ; and his swart bosom was covered with hair like a buffalo. In his hand he bore an iron club of enormous size, the end of which was armed with barbed knots of tempered steel. Clio and Cassander would have come to the assistance of their master, but he ordered them to stand back.

"Advance not," he said, "unless you see that I am likely to be overcome ; in which case you will step quickly up and let fly your arrows at the monster's eyes."

"How now !" cried Periphetes, advancing, and swinging his club in the air. "Whence come you, my poor child ?"

"I come from the country of Argolis, and am going into Attica," replied Theseus.

"Ho, ho,—into Attica, eh ? Not quite so fast, boy. I'll put thy bones in my pavement. You were careless to come this way ; but it is no fault of mine ; so shut your eyes, for your last moment has come !"

When Clio and Cassander saw the iron club raised they thought most surely that their master could not escape, wherefore they quickly fixed their arrows to their bow-

strings ; but they did not fire. Quick as the flash that darts through the heavens when the storm-crash comes, darted Theseus from beneath the iron club, and as he saw the terrible weapon strike the ground he gave the monster a blow upon the right wrist that almost severed the hand from the arm. With a howl of pain and rage that re-echoed through the forest like thunder he lifted his club again and smote at the youth with all his might ; but he had now met one who was not paralyzed by his presence, and whose address more than made up for the disparity in brute force. Again did Theseus avoid the descending club, and again, with unerring aim, did he smite the Titan upon the wrist. Another howl, more dreadful than the first, broke like an earthquake upon the air, and when Periphetes sought to raise his club the third time it fell from his nerveless grasp. His next attempt was to crush the youth with his foot, which he might easily have done had his antagonist been stricken with fear ; but no such emotion had yet entered the bosom of Theseus. He not only had the utmost confidence in his own prowess, but the sword of his father was a bolt of heaven in his hand. As the giant advanced upon him he smote the leg that was raised for his annihilation, and then sprang back. Howling and limping the monster now hurled himself forward to crush his enemy as with the weight of a mountain. Theseus let him come, receiving him upon the point of his sword, which he drove clean through the huge body. Periphetes started back, thus enabling the youth to withdraw his blade, and as he glanced down toward the mortal wound he observed the hilt of his antagonist's sword—the curiously entwined serpents of silver and gold, and the resplendent carbuncle.

"Ha !" he exclaimed, trying to shade his eyes with

his dangling hand, "thou art the son of Æthra! Thy name is Theseus!"

The hero gazed upon the giant in astonishment.

"How know you this?" he asked, holding back his blade.

"I know it very well, for none but Theseus could have possessed his father's sword. O!—O!—O!—this is death! May the gods blast thee forever!"

The monster threw up his arms as he spoke, and fell backward with a force that made the ground shake. Theseus hastened to the side of his victim and found him still breathing.

"Periphetes, answer me one question before you die: Who is my father?"

"Do you not know?"

"I do not."

"Then the knowledge shall never be yours. You have slain me; but there are dangers before you which you cannot overcome. Oh, you need not grasp your sword so fiercely, for the dangers of which I speak are not to be open ones. Between you and your father is woven a web so dark and so strong that your eyes will not discover it until you are fast within its fatal meshes."

"What mean you? Speak! speak!"

But the monster Periphetes spoke no more. His eyes glared for a moment like sparks in some smouldering ruin, and then, with a deep groan, he expired.

Theseus and his companions stood for a short time and eyed the dead colossus, and then they turned toward the palace; but they did not care to spend a long while in those sombre chambers. They found no living thing within, but everywhere only the ghastly mouldering remains of the unfortunate victims who had fallen beneath the dreadful iron club.

When they once more resumed their journey Theseus was silent and thoughtful. The words of Periphetes had given him more real concern than the presence of a hundred armed enemies could have done. What mystery was locked up in the dark sayings that had fallen upon his ears? What was it that lay so threateningly between him and his father? Little dreamed he then what the future had in store for him!

CHAPTER IV.

THESEUS FINDS USE FOR THE IRON CLUB.

On the day following the adventure with Periphetes, Theseus entered Attica, and toward night he arrived at the town of Daphne. He would have avoided this place if the thing had been possible, but the town lay close by the only pass through the mountains, and to have gone any other way would have cost him many days of travel; so he entered with a bold step, and sought an inn where travelers were lodged. It was not personal danger that the youth feared, for such a feeling had never yet found lodgment in his soul; but he feared that he might possibly be detained in his mission. Something whispered to him that it was of the utmost importance that he should speedily find his father; and not only from the order of his grandfather touching his avoiding Corinth, but also from the words of the dying Periphetes, he was led to believe that he had enemies who would stay his progress if they could. At that moment he would have given all he possessed, save his sword and sandals, could he have spoken his father's name; but since that privilege was denied him,

he must be content to wait until he could find Orestes, the silversmith.

Daphne was a place of beautiful groves and blooming gardens, so near to the sea that the gentle murmur of the breaking waves was borne musically upon the air, and many of the wealthy citizens of Athens often came there to enjoy the refreshing breezes that came up from the sea, or swept down from the mountains.

While Theseus and his companions were resting after supper, in a far-off apartment, there was commotion in the court of the inn, where a long table was spread beneath some olive trees, and where were gathered a score or more of people of different grades and classes.

"I tell you I saw it with my own eyes," said the host, a small, elderly man, whose accent betrayed him to be from Thessaly. "I saw it as plainly as I ever saw anything in my life."

"Out upon thee, Master Orphus," cried one of the guests. "Thou knowest it could not be."

"If I had not seen it with these very eyes which now look upon thee, I might not have believed," asserted Orphus; "but my sight does not deceive me. If the youth bore not the iron club of the monster Periphetes, then I'll give thee this inn, and all it contains."

"Why," exclaimed a second of the guests, who had just emptied a cup of wine, "how know you that it was the club of Periphetes? Did you ever see the giant?"

"Aye,—did you ever see the giant?" echoed the first guest.

"You talk like fools," retorted Orphus. "I never saw a lion; but I think I should not mistake a lion for a boar, should one chance to cross my path. I never saw the iron club of Periphetes until this night; but I have seen those who had seen it, and from their description I know that such another club was never made. I stand

to my promise. If it is not as I say I'll give thee this inn."

"And all it contains, you said?"

"Nay—not so."

"Ah, but you said so."

"How could I have said so, when my wife is the lawful owner of much that we use."

"O Orphus, you said, the inn, and all that it contained."

"If I said so, then 'twas a slip of the tongue; for, by high Olympus, I think the man would rue the hour in the which he took to himself goods belonging to the fair Thalia."

The guests smiled, for they knew the character of the wife of Orphus; and some of them shrank instinctively back as they fancied themselves exciting her wrath.

"I' faith, bold Orphus, thou art marvelous free with thy goods and chattels. To whom does this inn belong?"

"Not to Orphus! Not to Orphus!" cried half a dozen voices.

"Now may Vulcan seize thee, and hammer thee upon his anvil. Thou art a wicked and perverse set. But I swear unto thee, if it was not the club of Periphetes which this youth bore, then I'll give thee this head of mine."

"That cannot be," cried a wicked wretch, who had been quaffing his wine at the lower end of the table. "That prize, good Orphus, belongs to the public executioner."

The host was preparing for a sharp reply when a stranger entered the court of the inn, the dust upon whose garments showed that he had been traveling.

"Men of Daphne," he cried, advancing to the table, "I give you joy. I give to all the people of Attica joy.

The Corinthian Isthmus is no longer the highway of Death. The monsters Procrustes and Periphetes are both dead."

"Dead!" repeated a score of voices. "How know you this?"

"I have seen the dead body of Periphetes with my own eyes; and from some fishermen whom I saw upon the coast as I came along, I learn that the monster who stretched his victims upon the horrible iron bed is also dead. They were both slain by a youth who came from some part of Argolis."

"Now, fools!" cried Orphus, lifting his head as high as he could, "what think ye of my eyes? By the shades of Pluto I've a mind to kick you all into the street."

But the guests paid little heed to the words of the host. They gathered around the stranger, eager to hear his story.

While this was going on three more persons entered the court, and called for wine; and as they drank they listened attentively to the story which the traveler was telling. By and by, when they had heard all there was to hear, they paid for their wine and left the inn, and when they were in the dark street they stopped.

"What think ye of this?" said one of them.

"It must be Theseus," answered both the others.

"Certainly it must be," added the first speaker. "And he is even now beneath the roof of the inn. I' faith, our mission prospers. We must hasten with this intelligence, or we may be too late."

"I think there can be no mistake," said one of the others, hesitatingly.

"Of course, there can be no mistake. We know that the youth has left Trœzene, as our messengers brought us word across the sea; and we know that the death of

the two giants must have been the work of his hands. What further proof do we need ?"

And with this the three men sought the place where they had left their horses, and were soon dashing away toward Athens.

In the morning Theseus and his companions arose early, and left the inn before any one else was stirring. They had paid their reckoning on the night before, so they had nothing to wait for. At the distance of a league from Daphne they came to the cot of an humble herdsman, where they obtained breakfast; and when they set forth from this place the sun had been up not more than an hour.

"I think," said Theseus, as they stopped upon the brow of a hill, "that Athens cannot be far distant."

"When we have passed the valley before us," replied Clio, "and gained the top of yonder eminence, we shall behold the Temple of Minerva, and some of the structures upon the Hill of Mars."

"Are we so near ?"

"Yes, my master."

"I think I shall have no difficulty in finding Orestes, the silversmith."

"I see not how there can be difficulty in the way."

"Do you know this silversmith ?"

"Only by name. I never saw him."

"By the crown of Jove !" exclaimed Theseus, as he leaned upon the iron club of Periphetes, "I think we shall find no more obstacles to our progress. I have felt some misgivings."

"Not since you slew Periphetes ?"

"Yes, Clio, else I had had no misgivings at all; for such obstacles as can be swept from before me by sword are not worthy to be accounted as such. But let us hasten. We will reach Athens before noon, and ere

this day is gone I may stand face to face with my father."

They descended the hill, and when they reached the vale they entered a grove of olives, beyond which they came to an open plain, where sheep were grazing. They had arrived at a point where a small brook went murmuring through the centre of the plain, when they beheld a body of armed men emerge from the wood directly before them.

"Ah," said Theseus, "here is some expedition from Athens."

"Shall we move aside and allow them to pass us unquestioned?" asked Clio.

"No," replied the youth; "for that would look as though we feared them. How many are there?"

"I count just a score of them," said Cassander.

"More than that," added Clio. "There are two-and-twenty."

"They are stout-looking fellows," said Theseus, "and do credit, in their appearance, to the Athenian warriors."

By this time the strangers were close at hand, and as they came straight toward our three adventurers, the latter stopped. Eighteen of the warriors were on foot, the other four being mounted upon stout horses. Our hero moved aside as though he would allow them to pass, but they did not accept the proffered opportunity. They stopped directly before him, and he who seemed to be the leader—a powerful, middle-aged man, armed with sword and buckler, and mounted—addressed the youth as follows:

"Hold, fair sir, and answer me a question."

The tone was overbearing, such as Theseus had not been accustomed to, and his blood was up in a moment.

"Are you from Argolis?"

"I am going to Athens," replied the youth; "and in Athens I am willing to be questioned."

"But I choose to question you here," returned the officer, "and you will act wisely if you answer me. Are you from Argolis?"

Now Theseus very well knew that no friend, who sought to aid him, would speak in such tones; and he quickly made up his mind that these were enemies. He saw it in their looks; and Clio saw it, too; for he whispered to his master:

"See how they clutch their swords!"

"I see them," answered Theseus; and then turning to the officer, he continued:

"I like not your tone, nor do I like the manner in which you salute me. If you have business with me, let me know its import."

"First," retorted the officer, "I would know your name."

"And what if I choose not to give it?"

"Then you cannot pass on to Athens."

"What shall prevent me?"

"I shall prevent it."

"You?"

"Yes."

"Now, by the gods!" cried Theseus, towering aloft in the majesty of his wrath, and closing his hands upon the iron club which he bore, "I know that you are my enemies. If you are not, and have planned me no harm, pass quietly on, and begone from my sight. But, if you are enemies, and have planned to do me mortal injury, say so, that I may make no fatal mistake."

"Surely, young sir, you would not think of offering mortal combat to us."

"No; it is for you to offer."

"And what if we do offer?"

"That remains to be seen."

"Braggart, your own words have spoken your doom. Whatever may have been our intentions at first, we will no longer conceal from you that we are enemies. Your name we know. THESEUS will never see Athens! So if you choose, you may drop that mass of iron and draw your sword."

"My father's sword shall not be stained with the blood of such cravens!" cried our hero, raising the club as though it had been a staff of wood.

The Athenian warriors had evidently supposed that no mortal man, of ordinary mould, could wield that ponderous iron club; but in this they were wofully deceived. Like a thunderbolt hurled from the hands of Jove himself dashed Theseus upon the astounded warriors. With one sweep of his terrible weapon he crushed the chief to the earth, breaking half the bones in his body. Another sweep, and three of the stoutest warriors went down as though a mountain had tumbled upon them. The club served him for both sword and buckler; for, as he swung it about his head with the speed of lightning, no arm could reach him. Clio and Cassander were not idle, and even in them the Athenians found a force almost irresistible. Two horses had gone down beneath the dreadful club, and twelve men had been crushed out of human shape by its fatal weight, while Clio and Cassander had stricken down all who had come within their reach. Finally, two horsemen were left alone of all the gang, and they, in deepest terror, turned and dashed away at the top of their speed.

"O that I had the wings of Mercury!" cried Theseus as he saw the two horsemen escaping.

"Surely," said Clio, wiping the blood from his sword, "we have no reason to complain."

"I am not complaining, good Clio," returned Theseus.

"And yet," he added, thoughtfully, "I wish those fellows had not escaped. I like not that they should enter Athens before me."

"There is something in that," admitted Clio. "But, since we cannot go in advance, suppose we follow them as closely as possible."

"Well spoken, Clio. We will not be long in reaching the city." And thus speaking, Theseus swung his club upon his shoulder, and started on at a rapid pace.

At the summit of the next hill, as Clio had promised, they had the city of Athens in sight, and far beyond lay the blue waters of the Saronic gulf. To the left, upon a towering rock, stood the Acropolis, with its white walls glistening in the sunlight, while to the right the Hill of Mars lifted its front, bearing upon its summit, and upon its sloping sides, many habitations. But Theseus did not stop long to view the scene. He simply saw that the city before him was the grandest he had ever seen, and then he moved on toward the vale beneath.

The sun was at its meridian height when our adventurers entered the city of Athens, and Theseus asked of one of the soldiers who stood at the gate, if he could direct him to the dwelling of Orestes, the silversmith. The soldier had heard the name of the old craftsman, but he knew not where he lived. A little further on Theseus met an old man, with a basket of fruit in his hand, of whom he asked the same information that he had asked of the soldier.

"Certainly," replied the old man, in a frank tone, "I know Orestes very well, for my own dwelling is not far from his. I talked with him this very morning, and saw him make the bow for a silver cupid that he has been fashioning. Oh, he is a rare workman, fair sir;

and if you would have anything done in his line, let me recommend you not to pass him by."

"I have something for him to do," said Theseus, "and I should like to see him at once."

"If you will come with me, fair sir, you shall not wait long without seeing him. I will lead you directly to his door, and into his presence if you wish."

"Lead on, my friend."

The old man shifted his load to the other arm, and started on. The youth fancied that the basket might be heavy for him to carry, and he asked Clio to take it.

"It would give me pleasure to be rid of my burden," said the guide, as Clio offered to carry it; "but I hope you will not eat any of the fruit, for I am a poor man, and my wife and children are looking anxiously for what I am to bring them."

Theseus promised that he would pay roundly for all the fruit that might be missing, so the old man gave up his load, after which he stepped forward more rapidly.

After threading many streets they reached that part of the city directly below the rocky eminence upon which stood the Acropolis, where the guide at length stopped before a small gate, the frame of which was set in a high wall of hewn stone.

"Is this the dwelling of Orestes?" asked Theseus.

"It is," was the reply.

"He has it strongly fortified."

"Ah, fair sir, you must remember that he has much wealth stored within his abode. By my life, robbers would find plenty of plunder could they but pass this wall at night."

Before our hero could ask any more questions the summons of the guide was answered by the opening of the gate and the appearance of a man servant.

"Is your master at home?" asked the guide.

"He is."

"Then here are some gentlemen who wish to see him. Now, fair sir," continued the old man, turning to the youth, "this fellow will conduct you to the presence of Orestes, the silversmith. If you are with him to-morrow, I shall see you again. Thank you, sir; you have relieved me wonderfully. Zounds! when I was of your age I could carry as much as you; but I am young no longer." This last was addressed to Clio, who delivered up the basket as he had received it.

Theseus gave the old fellow a piece of silver, and having thanked him in addition, he turned and signified his readiness to follow the servant, who was waiting to conduct him.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE DARK!

After Theseus and his companions had entered the outer court the servant closed the gate behind them, and then led the way to the dwelling, which was of brick, the different apartments all opening into the inner court. They were conducted to a well furnished apartment, where they were informed they could wait until the master made his appearance. Presently the servant returned and asked Theseus if he had eaten dinner.

"Not a morsel since early dawn," ventured Clio, who was very hungry.

"My companion speaks the truth," added Theseus.

"My master is just now very busy with a noble gentleman for whom he is at work, and he says if you will

partake of some refreshment, he will join you by the time you have finished."

Our hero assented to this; so he followed the servant to another apartment, where a table was spread, upon which was bread, and meat, and wine, and various dried fruits.

"By my life," cried Clio, as he closed his teeth upon a piece of the tender meat, "I think this is a proper arrangement. The silversmith is a man of sense."

"You have not the desire to see him that I have," returned Theseus, "else your craving for food might not rule you so mightily."

"Yet, my master, you must confess that a full stomach gives excellent tone to a long conversation. After this you will be just in the mood to question the old fellow. By the leafy crown of Bacchus, but this wine is good. Have you tasted it, my lord?"

"Not yet, Clio. I am not so fond of wine as thou art. I love the juice of the vine while it is fresh and sweet in its purity; but when age has given it the sharpness of serpents' teeth I am shy of it."

"You will grow wiser as you grow older, my lord," laughed Clio, as he poured out a second cup of wine.

Theseus filled his own cup, and found the wine of an excellent flavor; but he did not drink much of it; for, as he had told his companion, he was not fond of it.

When the meal was finished the servant returned and informed Theseus that his master would now see him.

"And," he added, "he would see you alone, as he has something to say which is of importance."

This struck the youth as being perfectly proper, and without question he directed his companions to remain where they were until he called for them.

After their young master had gone Clio and Cas-

sander eat a little more, and drank a little more of the wine.

"Zounds!" cried Clio, as he poured down his capacious throat the wine which Theseus had left in his cup, "what a perverted taste our lord has got. I don't believe that Hebe ever presented to the gods a more delicious beverage than this."

"You are right," said Cassander, emptying his fourth cup. "Bless me, I should like to live with the old silversmith if he serves up such wine as this at every meal."

"Never mind," replied Clio, arising from his chair; "there is plenty of good wine in Athens. And now let us walk out into the court and breathe some fresh air, for I begin to feel stifled in this close atmosphere."

"So do I," returned Cassander. "I am not used to these sealed apartments."

If they had cast their eyes about them they would have seen that there were not only four open windows in the walls, but that the outer door was also open. However, they went out as had been proposed, and in the outer court they found an arbor of vines, within which were several rudely constructed seats; and here they sat down.

"I tell thee, Cassander," said Clio, yawning, "the god Somnus is at my elbow. I am sleepy."

"So am I," responded Cassander.

Clio did not speak again, for his head had sunk back, and he was sound asleep. Nor did Cassander wait for any reply to his last speech, for the words had hardly escaped his lips when he, too, lost all consciousness.

Shortly after this the servant who had conducted the party into the house came out and looked eagerly around. Finally he came to the arbor, and when he saw two men fast asleep he nodded and smiled. He

went in and touched them upon the shoulders and upon the cheeks, and even upon the lips, but they were not disturbed. Their sleep was too sound to be easily broken. The man assured himself that the sleepers were safely locked within the embrace of the drowsy god, after which he went back to the house ; and when he next came forth three stout companions accompanied him.

In the meantime Theseus had been led to another apartment, where he found an old man with white hair and beard, wearing silver-strapped sandals, and a robe of dark cloth ornamented with silver cord. His face was deeply furrowed, and his small grey eyes much sunken. The youth was disappointed. He had pictured to himself a kindly-looking, frank old man whose very face would invite confidence ; but he did not find it so. However, he dreamed of nothing wrong ; and this man might be better than he looked.

"Welcome, brave youth," said the host, advancing and extending his hand. He spoke frankly enough and seemed glad to see his visitor.

"Do I speak with Orestes?" asked Theseus.

"You do, fair sir ; and I think I have the pleasure of welcoming the son of Æthra beneath my roof"

"Yes, sir."

"Theseus?"

"Such is my name."

"Your good mother sent you unto me?"

"Yes, sir ; and she said you would conduct me to my father."

"Certainly. I have looked for you these many days. Sit down, sir, and rest ; for I think you have traveled far."

Theseus sat down.

"My servant provided refreshment for you?"

"Yes."

"And he gave you wine?"

"Yes."

"Was the wine good?"

"I thought so, sir; though I drank but very little. I am not a lover of wine."

The old man looked carefully into the youth's face, as though he would weigh the truth of every word. At first he seemed a little troubled, but he quickly recovered himself.

"Your taste is a fortunate one, Theseus. Men who pay too much devotion at the shrine of Bacchus are not fit to govern. You spoke of your father. Had you been here on the day before yesterday I could have led you directly to him; but now you must wait. He has left the city, and will not return for several days. However, that need not worry you, for my house shall be your home."

"One thing you can do, sir, at once," said Theseus, eagerly. "You can tell me the name of my father; you can tell me who he is."

"Your mother did not tell you this?"

"If she had there would have been no need of my seeking you."

"True, my son. I see how the matter stands. You are anxious to know the quality of the blood that flows in your veins. Did your mother lead you to understand that you would take noble position in Athens?"

"She led me to understand nothing."

"Poor Æthra!" uttered the old man, resting his hands upon his knees and gazing down upon the floor.

"How, sir!" cried Theseus with a start.

"Ah, my son, I fear you have been led to expect too much. Did your mother ever tell you how she first met your father

"Old man," exclaimed our hero, rising to his feet, "speak plainly. I have come to you for information. Tell me what you have to tell, and I shall be grateful."

"Ah, not so grateful as you may imagine, young sir. Your father is a brave man, and one of the best soldiers in Attica; but—"

"Speak on, sir."

"My dear Theseus, let me advise you. Wait until your father returns, and then he will tell you all you wish to know."

"You called my father a soldier. Is he a common soldier?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because I would know."

"The answer may not please you."

"Your refusal to answer will please me less."

"Well, my son, since you demand it, I will give you the answer you seek. Your father is a common soldier."

"Then how came he to marry with the daughter of a king?"

"Before I answer that question, my dear Theseus, let me call your attention to a simple fact: Trœzene is not an important place, and its King is not a monarch of much note."

"Hold, sir!" cried the youth, with a flushed brow. "My grandfather is King, and that is enough. His subjects pay him homage, and he is their law-giver. My mother is his daughter. Now, I ask you, how came she to marry with a common soldier?"

"My son, I have a mind to answer thee plainly."

"You will please me if you do."

"At all events, you cannot blame me."

"Not at all."

"Then sit down and listen."

Our hero resumed his seat, and the old man continued :

" After all, it may be as well for me to disclose to you the secret of your birth, for then your father will have less of unpleasant things to tell. Your mother came to the court of Athens when she was very young, and was affianced to one of the noblest youths of Attica, a near relative of the king. Over the apartments of the palace which she occupied was stationed a guard, and one of the soldiers, a brave, handsome young fellow, attracted her attention and inspired her with sudden passion. Unfortunately he returned her love and sought opportunity to make it manifest. Æthra fled from the palace with her low-born lover, and for the space of a year all search for her was in vain. At length, however, she returned to Athens, bearing an infant in her arms. Her lover, meanwhile, was lurking in the forest, where, by curious chance, he saved the life of the only child of the king. This event gained him pardon, and he was permitted to return to the city ; but he was not allowed to see Æthra any more. The infant was sent to Trœzene, where its mother was allowed to visit it once in every year. Do you wish to know more ?"

" Yes. I wish to know how my father became possessed of the sword and sandals which he left for me ?"

" They were given him by a dying warrior whom he nursed while hidden in the forest. Some have said that the warrior was an outcast from Olympus, where he had offended the gods, and that the sword had wonderful properties, such as none have which are made by mortal hands. Your father feared that the sword and sandals might be stolen from him, so he caused them to be hidden where you found them."

" I wish to ask you no more at present," said Theseus.

" Let me hope," added the host, " that this intelli-

gence will not cast you down. You are yet young, and there may be opportunity for you to carve out a name as noble as any upon earth."

"I will do my own planning, sir," returned our hero, rather warmly; and then, as though he repented his haste, he added, "I thank you for what you have told me. Let me rest now, and when I have had time for thought we will converse again."

"You can remain here as long as you wish, my son. In the adjoining apartment you will find a comfortable couch, which you can consider as your own. Out of the love I bear your mother I am inclined to be a friend to you."

"Thank you. I will remain with you to-night, at all events."

When the old man had gone Theseus sat down and buried his face in his hands. He remained so for some time, and then he started off and began to pace to and fro across the chamber.

"And this is the secret of my mother's unwillingness to tell me of my father," he cried. His hands were clasped before him, and his head was bent. "This is why she sent me hither in ignorance of the prime source of my being. Oh, would that I had remained all my days at the court of my grandfather. My life is tainted; a blot is upon the name I must bear! I wonder not that my mother refused to accompany me to Athens. And yet I will not blame her. She may have suffered more than I shall suffer."

At length the youth stopped and pressed his hand upon his brow. He remained thus a few moments, and when he again raised his head there was a new light in his eye.

"Verily," he exclaimed, "I am moaning without cause. Already have I placed all Attica in my debt.

Who slew the giant Procrustes! Who swept the monster Periphetes from his lair of death? Surely, when the king knows of this, he will do me honor. And my work is not yet done. Orestes spoke wisely. I am young and I will carve out a noble name."

With this our hero sat down, and the soft breeze which came in at the open window, laden with the perfume of opening flower and aromatic shrub soon won him into a gentle slumber. When he awoke he found that the day had gone. A lamp was burning upon a table close by him, and upon a silver tray was food and drink. He partook sparingly of the refreshment, after which he sought the chamber where his couch was.

And where were Clio and Cassander? Clio was the first to awake, and having rubbed his eyes until he was assured that the darkness was not to be penetrated by mortal vision, he called aloud for his companion.

"Hallo! Cassander! In mercy's name wake up. Where are you?"

A low grunt announced that he of Argos was close at hand.

"Cassander,—are you awake?"

"Yes. Where am I?"

"By the shades of Tartarus, that is just what I wish to find out. Where is your hand?—ah, all right. Now let us hold an examination."

With eyes open or eyes closed it was all the same. The place was as dark as could have been a cell in the very centre of the earth; and it felt damp and noisome, too. They moved carefully around, feeling the walls with their hands, and very soon they came together again. It was a small plaee, with floor of uneven rock, and with walls of the same, while the atmosphere gave clear token that it was far under ground. Finally they stopped and Clio spoke:

"Cassander, what do you make of this?"

"Our master is in a net," replied the faithful follower, thinking first of Theseus.

"By the gods, I believe ye speak truly. As I live I do not think that we have come to the house of Orestes. That old fellow whose basket I carried was a villain."

"At any rate," said Cassander, "we are within a deep, strong dungeon. I felt the iron door and all my strength was not sufficient to jar it."

"I see," pursued Clio. "The wine we drank placed us within the power of our enemies. I can taste it now. Oh, this is most unfortunate."

"But," suggested the other, "our master did not drink of that wine. He barely tasted it, and that was all. He may not have fallen as we have done."

"Oh," cried Clio, clasping his hands, "would that I could find Theseus now. One word of caution might save him. I know that this is not the house of Orestes, for I know that Orestes is a kind, good man. Æthra would never have sent her son to such a place as this."

And so the two men talked on. They knew that they had been entrapped, and cast into a dark dungeon, and that their weapons and their money had been taken from them. But what was the hour they could not judge, though they supposed it must be night.

By and by they heard a noise not far away, and presently afterward there was a sliding sound, and a stream of light came in close by the floor. The prisoners cast their eyes in that direction and saw a pot of water and a loaf of bread pushed in. They spoke but received no answer. The aperture in the door was closed, and the unseen visitor went away, leaving them in darkness as impenetrable as before.

CHAPTER VI.

A FEARFUL VENTURE.

Despite the burden which had come upon the soul of Theseus, his sleep was sound and refreshing, and when he awoke the beams of the morning sun were already gilding the hilltops. He arose and dressed himself and while he was smoothing back the curling locks from his brow he heard a strange noise in the street. It sounded like the wailing of many voices, and he fancied that he could distinguish sobs and moans. He hastened to the window of the adjoining apartment where he could gain a view of the street, and ere long a crowd of people came moving by. They were clad in garments of black and the leaders bore black banners. It was certainly a procession of mourners, and yet he saw no bier. As the strange scene was passing from sight a door was opened and the host entered the chamber.

"A fair morning to thee, my son," saluted the old man, trying to smile as he spoke.

"It is a fair morning," answered our hero; "and yet," he added, "I have seen signs of sadness in the street."

"Ah, you saw the mourning procession, did you?"

"Yes; but I saw no bier. Is some great man dead?"

"How, my son,—do you not know the meaning of what you have seen?"

"No, sir. You will remember that I am a stranger in Athens."

"Then you know not the deep gloom which rests upon our city to-day. Ah, Theseus, this is a day so dark that all Athens feels the throb of grief. Seven youths and seven maidens are to be this day selected for death."

"I have heard something of this," said our hero; "but I supposed the dreadful penalty was no longer exacted. How is it, sir? I am anxious to hear the story from one who knows the truth."

"Sit thee down, my son, and I will explain."

Theseus took a seat, and the old man went on:

"Many years ago the Athenians made war upon Minos, king of Crete. They landed an army upon his shores, and laid waste and destroyed many of his villages, and quite a number of women and children were killed. Minos soon gathered together a mighty army, gave the Athenians battle, and put them to flight; but he was not content with this. He crossed the sea and landed upon the shores of Attica, and Athens was at length at his mercy. In revenge for the women and children that had been slaughtered in his own domain he planned to put all the inhabitants of the city to the sword, and an order to that effect had already been given to his soldiers when Ægeus, the king of Athens, went forth bareheaded and alone, to sue for mercy. Minos conferred with his chief men, and finally terms were agreed upon as follows: The Athenians were, once a year, to deliver up to the king of Crete seven youths and seven maidens for sacrifice. The terms were hard, but in no other way could the city be saved. Ægeus accepted the lesser evil, and Minos withdrew his forces from Attica. And, my son, each year since, this

fearful penalty has been paid. The victims are drawn by lot from all the youths and maidens of Athens, and are sent to Crete."

"And there they are slain?" said Theseus.

"There," replied the old man, with a shudder, "they are led within the mazes of a labyrinth from which no mortal can escape unassisted. This labyrinth was constructed by Dædalus, and is considered one of the most wonderful works of the age, as even the lions which roam through its intricate and artfully contrived passages have never yet been known to make their way out."

"Lions?" said Theseus, shuddering in turn.

"Yes," replied the host. "Twelve lions are shut up within that labyrinth, which feed upon the human victims that are cast in to them. It is terrible."

"And do the Athenians tamely submit?" asked Theseus, with a flushed brow.

"There is no help. Minos is the most powerful king, and any failure on our part to pay the yearly tribute of these fourteen lives would entail sure destruction upon our city."

"Is there no escape at all? Does Minos offer no opportunity?"

"He makes a show of such an offer; but it amounts to nothing. He has announced that when the Athenian youths can overcome his lions, not only shall they be free, but no more victims shall be demanded."

"And is not that an opportunity?"

"How can it be, my son? Remember, there are twelve lions, all from beyond the Egyptian confines, either one of which could with ease slay a hundred stout men. And remember further, that the youths are led into the labyrinth unarmed. Now, not only must the lions be overcome by unarmed men, but the victors,

if such they prove, must find their way out from that combination of interminable windings. Ah, it is adding cruelty to cruelty to publish such an offer. Ten thousand men would starve within that mystic labyrinth before one of their number could thread the way that leads to the outer world."

"Still," said Theseus, thoughtfully, "you think Minos would keep his promise?"

"Certainly he would."

"When are these victims to be chosen?"

"They are making the choice now."

"Where?"

"At the Temple of Minerva, in the Acropolis."

"Now, by the crown of immortal Jove," cried our hero, starting to his feet, and smiting his hands together, "I will be one of the number!"

"How!" exclaimed the old man, also starting up. "Do you mean that you will give yourself a victim for Crete?"

"Yes. I will go; and I go with the hope that I may be able to overcome the monsters that are thus fed with the best blood of Athens. If I succeed I will have an honorable name in Attica, and no fault of my parents can rest upon me. If I fail I shall only pay the debt which must be paid by all of mortal mould sooner or later."

A strange light beamed in the eyes of the old man.

"Noblest of youths," he cried, "your decision is worthy of a god. If I advised you from the love I have conceived for you, I should urge you to leave the venture untried; but higher motives actuate me. If you go and succeed in bringing Minos to a relinquishment of his fatal claim upon us, your name shall stand above all other names in Attica. And, as I think of what you

have already done, the work does not appear impossible of accomplishment."

"I must go."

"Then we should be on our way, my son."

"I most first see my companions. Where are they?"

"Do you mean the two men who came with you?"

"Yes."

"I think they have gone off to look about the city. Perhaps they have followed the crowd to the Acropolis. But you can see them afterward."

"You are sure they are not in the house?"

"They are not. I saw them go out as the procession was moving by."

"Then let me have some breakfast, and after I have eaten I will accompany you."

The host hurried away, and in a very short time the meal was served. Theseus ate, and then announced his readiness to depart.

In the Temple of Minerva, at early dawn, were assembled many people; and when the rays of the sun rested upon the lower city, all the youths and maidens of Athens were within the sacred edifice. There were pale faces and trembling lips, and many were the prayers that went up to the gods from those unhappy mortals. The selection was to be made—fourteen of the fairest of Attica's children were to be given up to dreadful sacrifice. And yet there was no thought of resisting the impending doom. All knew that Ægeus, the king, could not prevent it if he would. This was the price to be paid for the life of the city; and though the fate of the victims was a terrible one, yet they had the consolation of knowing that their names would be held in sacred remembrance by their country.

At the appointed time three priests appeared at the altar, clothed in black robes, and before them was

placed a box in which were two hundred small blocks of wood. One hundred and ninety-three of these were white, and seven of them were black. The maidens drew first. All was still within the temple as the fair virgins of Athens went forward, one after another, to decide their fate. They could not look into the box. They could only reach in with their right hand, and as the blocks were all of the same size and texture, no instinct could guide them in their selection.

There was silence in the temple no longer. Seven black blocks had been drawn, and seven maidens were doomed to death in the far-off island of Crete. There was weeping and wailing. Daughters were folded for the last time in the embrace of stricken parents, and lovers and brothers were smitten with fearful agony.

But the work was not yet done. The blocks were returned to the box, and now the young men were to draw. Six black cubes had consigned six youths to death, and then a score of white ones followed. Who should draw the seventh ? Leaning against one of the marble pillars stood Philip, the son of Io. He was one of the fairest youths of Athens, and the future had looked bright before him. His father had been dead many years, and he had been the sole support of his mother since his hands were strong enough to bend a bow or lift a javelin. Io was upon his left side, breathing prayers to the gods. Upon his right stood Camilla, his betrothed, a maiden so beautiful that even Venus might have envied her ; and she, too, prayed that Philip might be spared.

At length Philip left his mother and his betrothed, and advanced to the altar. He placed his hand in the box, and when he withdrew it he held between his thumb and finger the seventh black cube ! Slowly he returned to the place where he had left Io and Camilla,

and when they saw the fatal block their hearts were stricken as though with the icy touch of death. The mother was speechless in her agony; but not so the maiden. She threw her arms about her lover's neck, and bade him take courage.

"You shall not go alone, dear Philip," she said. "I must bear thee company."

"You, Camilla?"

"Yes. Antiope, the daughter of Lycus, has drawn a dooming block, and I will take it from her."

"No, no, dearest Camilla; that must not be. When I am gone who shall comfort my poor mother if thou art not here. Oh, sweet one, it is cruel, but we must submit."

"Philip, do not refuse me the boon I ask. I wish not to live after thou art gone. Oh, let me go with thee; and since we cannot live and love, let us together pass into the world of shadows."

Before Philip could reply he felt a heavy hand upon his shoulder, and when he looked up he beheld a youth of noble bearing standing by his side. For an instant he forgot his cause of grief in admiration of the stranger's form and face.

"My brother," spoke the new-comer, in a voice of strange depth and sweetness, "thou hast drawn a prize."

"A prize of death," answered Philip, sadly.

"To you it might so prove; but in my hands it may prove a prize of life. Give me the black cube."

"How," cried the son of Io, in amazement. "Are you serious, or have you come to trifle with me?"

"The gods forbid that I should trifle on such an occasion as this. I wish to go to Crete as one of the seven. I was too late to offer myself before the chances were drawn; so I am now forced to beg the

chance of some other person. Again, in all seriousness, I ask for yours."

Philip still seemed unable to believe what he heard.

"You must be a stranger in Athens, fair sir."

"Yet Athens may claim me for her son."

"But do you know what is to be the fate of those who bear these black prizes?"

"I know what has been the fate of those who have drawn them heretofore; and in that full knowledge I ask you for your chance. If you refuse me I shall appeal to this fair maiden, who, I think, has some interest in the matter. If she fails me, I will turn to this lady who weeps as though she were losing her son. If that avails me not, then I must look elsewhere. Now, what say you?"

Philip grasped the hand of his unknown friend, and gazed earnestly into his face.

"Noble sir," he said, "if you seek to offer yourself for me, I cannot accept; for you may leave a mother who would mourn for you. But if you seek this chance independent of all considerations in my behalf—if you seek it because you had so planned before you saw me in my grief—then I will yield."

"I swear to thee before the altar of our goddess, that I am bound to go to Crete as one of the fated seven. If I take not your chance, then I must find another."

Philip objected no more. He gave up the black cube, after which both the mother and the maiden fell upon the stranger's neck and blessed him.

"Now," said the released youth, "you will tell me your name; for, though you have done this thing for yourself, yet I shall ever regard you as my saving genius."

"My name I will not tell you now. If we ever meet again you will know me. Go with your mother and with

this fair damsel, and be happy." And with these words he turned and hastened away.

"Alas!" murmured Philip, "I never shall see him again. He goes to the doom from which there is no escape. But I could not help it." He would have spoken further, but Io and Camilla were upon his bosom, and they soon engaged all his thoughts.

In the meantime he who had taken Philip's fatal prize sought the altar, where he presented himself before the priests. They looked upon him, and asked what he wanted.

"Philip, the son of Io, drew a black cube," he said.

"Yes."

"Here it is. I go in Philip's place."

"How?"

"You need not wonder at my choice. I go to Crete in place of Philip."

As soon as the priests could overcome their astonishment sufficiently to enable them to speak, they asked the youth his name; but he chose not to reveal it.

"It matters not," he said. "King Minos cares not for names. Let the record stand as it is; or, if you wish to account for Philip's presence in Athens, you can set it down that a stranger took the seventh chance."

While the priests were making a note of this wonderful event in the record of the day's events, the youth turned from the altar, and was soon joined by an old man.

"How is it, my dear Theseus, have you—"

"Hush, good Orestes. Speak not that name so loudly. I am one of the seven; and of course, when I leave this temple, it must be for the ship that is to bear us over the sea."

"Yes, my son,—such is the rule."

"Have you seen Clio or Cassander yet?"

"No. They are not in the temple, and I cannot imagine what has become of them."

"I should like to see Clio. I would send some word to my mother."

"If you do not see him, my son, I will give him any instruction you may desire."

"Tell him," said our hero, after a little thought, "just what I have done. He will understand the rest. Furthermore, you will tell him to take the iron club of Periphetes back with him to Trœzene and give it to my grandfather."

The old man promised; and before Theseus had opportunity for further speech, the officers of the king came for those who had drawn the fatal blocks.

Later in the day a ship at one of the landing-places of the Piræus, spread her sails to the breeze, and prepared to clear herself from the shore. The sails were black; the masts were black; and all about her was black, even to the garments of the crew. She was to bear to Crete the fourteen victims for the lions of Minos. Theseus was the last to step on board, as he had taken the last block drawn. He had not seen Clio; but he hoped that his host would keep his promise. Philip, the son of Io, and Camilla, the maiden were there; and they pressed forward and kissed the hands of the heroic youth.

"You will know me if you see me again," said the saving genius; and in a moment more he had passed on board the ship.

Philip stood with Camilla leaning upon his arm, and watched the vessel as she departed; and when he could see the black sails no longer he turned to his companion and sadly said:

"Alas! we shall never see him more! But we will not forget him, sweet love. We will offer up our pray-

ers daily in his behalf ; and in the years to come, if we are so blessed, we will teach our children to honor his sacred memory."

CHAPTER VII.

ARIADNE.

Minos, King of Crete, was one of the most powerful monarchs of his time. His island,* one of the largest in the Mediterranean, was diversified with hills and mountains and valleys and beautiful plains, offering inducements alike to the husbandman, the hunter, and the man of wealth ; so that, in time, Minos found himself at the head of a populous and thrifty realm. King Minos was an old man ; but he had lost little of his manhood's vigor. He could draw a bow or wield a javelin with the best of his warriors, and the affairs of State were administered without the assistance of minister or council. He was a stern, uncompromising man, for whom no deed was too cruel if he, in the hardness of his heart, deemed it just.

Minos' youngest and fairest child was the beautiful ARIADNE. She was but eighteen years of age, and each of the heavenly deities seemed to have bestowed upon her some mark of favor. Her hair, of a golden brown, floated in wavy, rippling tresses over her shoulders, reflecting back a glorious sheen to the sunlight ; her face was the abode of every perfected charm ; and her form fit to grace the Vestal throne. There had been many suitors for Ariadne's hand, but she had rejected them all—not because her heart was cold, but because she had not yet met the man whom she could wholly and

* Now called CANDIA.

devotedly love; and, furthermore, her father had not yet urged her to marry. But a change was coming. Serapis, the powerful King of Egypt, had heard of the matchless beauty of the daughter of the King of Crete, and with many ships in his train he came to claim her hand. He saw the maiden, and he was deeply enamored; and straightway he demanded her in marriage.

Minos was overjoyed by the proposition, and at the earliest opportunity he presented the Egyptian monarch to his daughter. Ariadne beheld an old man—almost as old as her father—low-browed and dark, with marks of passion and excess deeply graven upon his swart face. She treated him politely, as she was forced to treat every guest of her father; but as soon as possible she made her escape from the disagreeable presence.

That evening her father came to her chamber.

"My daughter," he said, "Serapis has demanded of me your hand in marriage."

Ariadne turned pale as death.

"Oh my father, I can never be the wife of that man."

"You know not what you say, my child. Serapis is one of the most powerful of living monarchs, and here is offered an opportunity for me to secure his firm alliance. He must not go back without you."

The maiden sank upon her knees, and clasped her hands.

"In mercy's name, my father, spare me. I should be miserable with that man. Oh, do not force me to this. I cannot love him."

"What need has a queen to love?"

"But I may not be his queen. I know that the Egyptian king has wives already."

"He has no queen, my child. You are of a royal family, and he will elevate you to his throne."

"And yet, father, you will spare me."

"I shall give you in marriage to Serapis."

"No, no,—Oh, no. Take back those words. I would rather be cast into the fearful labyrinth of Mount Ida, there to be devoured by the famishing lions, than go away from Crete the wife of that man. You will not, my father,—Oh, you cannot do it. Upon my knees I entreat you."

"You entreat as a child," answered the king, sternly. "Now listen as the Princess of Crete. Serapis asks your hand in marriage, and I have promised it; for not in all the world is there a more advantageous opportunity. The alliance will strengthen me, and henceforth there shall be no power able to cope with me. You have heard. Prepare to obey."

Minos had turned to leave the apartment, when Ariadne sprang to her feet.

"My father, when must this marriage take place?"

"When it pleases Serapis."

"How long will he remain here?"

"Until after the Athenian victims arrive."

"Alas! and are more of those poor Athenians to be sacrificed in the horrible labyrinth?"

"Verily, my child, I believe you are losing your senses. Do you feel pity for the fate of the Athenians?"

"How can I help it! Oh, did I not see those whom last year you consigned to the famishing lions? Among the fair those maidens were the fairest, and among the noble those youths were the noblest. And I saw how grandly they met their fate. When will this sacrifice come to an end?"

"When my lions are overcome," replied Minos.

"Oh, that is cruel," cried the princess, who, when her sympathies were aroused, was apt to speak plainly. "You know that no mortal hand can overcome those

terrible beasts, especially since those victims are deprived of all arms. As well might they contend against the bolts of Jupiter. And, furthermore, how are they to get out from the labyrinth, even should they escape the lions?"

Minos laughed—a cold, cruel laugh.

"Ah, my daughter, it is likely to be some years yet ere Athens will cease to feel the weight of my power. Oh, it is a glorious thing to feel that the name of Minos is heard with fear and trembling by the people of Athens."

"And is it glorious to know that a whole nation curses you, my father?"

The king turned upon his child a look of rage.

"How now, ungrateful girl! Would you question the right and justice of my doings?—by the gods, I'll bid Serapis to teach you manners. In a week, at the farthest, the Athenian ship will arrive; and we'll close the ceremonies of the occasion with your nuptials." The king stopped a moment, and then added, with threatening gesture:

"From this time until you are the wife of Serapis you are responsible to me; and let me see that you treat our royal guest becomingly. If you do not I may forget that you are my child."

With this Minos left the chamber, and the fair Ariadne threw herself upon her couch and groaned in bitterness of spirit. She did not experience that deep anguish which one might have experienced who was to be torn from some idolized object, for as yet her heart was her own; but she felt a sense of deep disgust and loathing for the King of Egypt; and she had told the truth when she said that she would rather be cast into the den at Mount Ida than to be given over to that

man. She was still upon her couch when a small side door was opened, and a young girl entered.

The new-comer was a black-eyed, pretty girl, whose simple garb of white cloth betokened her station of servitude. Her raven hair was gathered by a band of transparent beads behind her head, and her dress was fastened close about her throat by a small gold button.

"My dear mistress, what ails you?"

"Is this you, Thalia?"

"Certainly it is. Here—let me hold your head. What is it, lady?"

Ariadne sat up, and as she gazed into the face of her faithful, devoted servant, light began to break in upon the shadows that had rested upon her brow.

"Dear Thalia, I am in trouble."

"You in trouble, sweet lady? I see not how that can be, unless your stern father has been upbraiding you."

"That is not it," said the princess, shaking her head.

"Then what can it be?"

"Have you seen Serapis, the King of Egypt?"

"Yes," answered Thalia, shuddering.

"How should you like him for a husband?"

"Oh—don't!" cried the girl, starting as though she had heard the hiss of a serpent.

"Then you think you wouldn't like him for a husband?"

"Mercy! I'd rather marry a satyr. But why do you ask me such questions?"

"Because my father has promised my hand to that man."

Thalia stood for some moments aghast. At length she said:

"But you will not be his wife. Oh, what an ugly

oking monster he is. I should be afraid of him. ou will not marry him."

"How can I help it, Thalia?"

"Will your father force you to it?"

"Yes. His mind is made up, and nothing will rn him."

"Then," said the girl, thoughtfully, "we must con- ive some way to outwit them. Oh, you must not go way into that dreadful country. You don't know what terrible place it is. I have talked with one of the ser- ants of King Serapis, and he told me that the rivers that country swarmed with monsters that feed upon omen and children. The sun shines down so hot ere that people are sometimes burned up, and the ery wind, which is here so cool and refreshing, is there ke the breath of Tartarus."

"These things are dreadful," said the princess; "but ey cannot add to the terror I feel in anticipation of ecoming that old man's wife."

"But when does your father say you must be mar- ed?"

"After the Athenian ship has arrived. It may be a eek—perhaps more."

"Then let us hope, dear lady. Kings are not always e wisest of men, and it is not impossible that two oung girls may overcome the plans of two old kings. t any rate, my mistress, we will try. Only you must e careful how you conduct yourself before your father. hould you give him reason to suspect that we were lotting against him, or should you offend him further y ill-toned allusion to Serapis, he might prove too owerful for us."

"Fear not," returned Ariadne. "I think I know ow to conduct myself. We will watch narrowly, and the worst seems likely to come we will flee from my

father's court. We can hide in the forest until search is over, and then make our way from Crete."

"You would not object, then, to leave your father?"

"Ah, Thalia," replied the princess, with a sigh, "since the death of my sweet mother I have not known a parent's love. King Minos is my father, but he has never given me a father's love; and he did not love my mother as he ought to have done. If he had been more kind to her she would not have died as she did. Yes—I would leave my father's court without regret; and when I come to think of marrying with Serapis, I am free to declare that I would rather wander in the forest all the rest of my days."

"Then I will help you all I can, dear lady."

The princess felt better after this, for she fancied that she might escape the doom which her father had planned for her.

Several times during the ensuing week was Ariadne brought into the Egyptian King's presence; and she not only contrived to hide her feelings of disgust, but she managed to treat him quite well; the result of which was that Serapis fell more deeply in love than ever. He begged of Minos that the nuptials might be celebrated at once. He was anxious to possess the matchless prize of beauty. He feared that some evil influence might snatch her away from him if he delayed.

But Minos told him that he had promised his child that she should remain free until after the feast of the lions, and he could not break his word.

"Not," added the King of Crete, "because Ariadne fears to become your wife, but because she loves her father and shrinks from the thought of leaving him. Wait, my brother, and be assured that the prize will be none the less valuable when it is yours."

That evening Serapis not only gazed upon the matchless loveliness of Ariadne, but he took her small white hand in his and kissed it. The princess came very near shrieking when the parched lips touched her ; but she managed to control herself until she reached her own chamber, where she washed the polluted hand in many sweet-scented waters.

One morning there was commotion in the capital of Crete. The first rays of the rising son were caught by the black sails of a ship that was entering the harbor, and the people knew that the victims had arrived from Athens. There were no such demonstrations as would have been manifest upon a more cheerful occasion ; nor were there so many shudderings and regrets as might have been expected from a sympathizing and enlightened people. The inhabitants of Crete knew that this annual tribute of life was done from Athens by treaty, and they remembered that Ægeus, the Athenian King, had made war upon them and slain many of their women and children. There were some in Crete who would have been pleased to see the measure of the tribute doubled ; while there were others who were fully satisfied with the atonement of blood already made. The people of Crete had not the privilege of beholding the sufferings of these victims, for none, save the few keepers, who knew all the windings of the labyrinth, and who had hiding-places of their own within its fatal depths, could enter with safety.

The Athenian ship was anchored at some distance from the shore, and Minos sent off barges of his own to bring the victims to the land.

Up from the landing-place they marched—those seven youths and seven maidens—dressed in black, and guarded by Cretan soldiers. Their way was toward the Royal Palace where Minos awaited their coming, and as

they moved slowly onward they were gazed upon by the thousands who thronged the thoroughfare.

But why is it that the people gaze now as they have never gazed before? What are those whispers that run so eagerly from mouth to mouth?

"Who is he? Who is he?"

Such is the burden of the whispered speech.

Aye,—who is that right royal-looking youth that leads the van of the victims? Never before did Athenian tread so proudly and defiantly the soil of Crete. Never before did Athens send so noble a man to be food for the lions of Minos.

"O my life!" exclaimed a Cretan maiden, who stood by the street-corner, "they must not consign such a youth to the labyrinth! It is wicked!"

"He will not die," said another maiden, who was among the most beautiful of the daughters of Crete. "Some pitying goddess will descend from the celestial abode and snatch him from the bloody lions. Mercy, if Juno espies this beautiful youth, Jupiter will need to look well to the wanderings of the heavenly queen!" She spoke enthusiastically, and evidently meant what she said.

By and by the sombre procession reached the court of the palace, where Minos was in waiting to review them. With him were the King of Egypt, and some of his principal officers, and also Ariadne and her attendants.

"By the gods!" exclaimed Serapis, "it seems a pity to give that noble youth up to destruction. I'll give thee an hundred talents of silver if thou'lt give me his life and bind him to me as a soldier!"

Minos shook his head. It could not be done.

Ariadne, who had been gazing with pity and compassion upon the fair maidens who were doomed to the

dreadful death, heard the words of Serapis, and straightway her gaze rested upon the youth of whom mention had been made ; and, as chance would have it, the youth was at the self-same moment gazing upon her.

What were those strange thrills that went vibrating through the frame of the Cretan princess? Never, in all her life had she beheld a youth like that. She had fancied some such form and face for the more favored of the gods ; but she had never expected to see such charms in one of human mould. She saw those dark eyes burn like the evening lamps of Hesperus ; she saw the rich color come to the full cheeks like the glow of the sunset sky ; she saw the broad bosom swell, as with powerful emotion ; and she saw the lips part as though they would utter speech. She drank in the rapturous influence of the scene until she was almost intoxicated. The beauty of the Athenian youth, and the grandeur of his bearing, were more than inspiring.

After she had gazed until she dared gaze no more, Ariadne turned to Thalia, who stood behind her, and caught her by the hand.

"Let us go," she said.

"Hush ! Wait a moment, lady. I see it all. Your father is going presently. Smile if you can—the people are gazing upon you."

Once more Ariadne ventured to turn her head, and once more she met the light of those dark, lustrous eyes. She dared not look again.

When Minos had viewed the human tribute, and had seen that the number was full, and the ages of the victims right—neither too old nor too young—he directed that they should be conducted to the dungeons beneath his palace until the morrow, when they would be given up to the fate that awaited them in the labyrinth at Mount Ida.

CHAPTER VIII.

CUPID IN A DUNGEON.

For some time after Ariadne reached her chamber she sat like one in a dream. Thalia was present, but she did not disturb her mistress. The princess at length spoke:

"Thalia, did you notice him?" She did not raise her head, but she put the question in a meditative way.

"Did I notice whom, my lady?"

Ariadne looked up as though surprised at her attendant's reply.

"There was but one to notice. Did you notice him?"

"Ah, you mean the Athenian youth."

"Yes."

"How could I help noticing him? I never before saw such beauty and such grace. Apollo himself cannot be more comely. And what majesty in his bearing! Did you mark how proud and noble he looked? Did you mark the calm composure with which he heard the words of the king when the hour was set for the sacrifice? Did you see the wondrous light of his large, dark eyes?"

The princess pressed her hand upon her breast and sighed.

"O Thalia, do you think that he left his heart with some maiden in his native land?"

The girl started, for her mistress had clearly revealed her secret. Some servants might have made strange of such a question, and draw the princess into a fuller confession; but not so Thalia. She knew the warm, generous nature of her lady, and she was ready to meet confidence with confidence. She arose from her seat, and stood by Ariadne's side.

"My sweet mistress, it is a very easy thing to be mistaken. I have been mistaken many times in my life; but yet I will not refuse to follow my own instincts when they are supported by reason. I do not think that the Athenian youth loves any one in his native land."

"Why do you think so, Thalia?"

"Because, if his heart had been in Athens he could not have gazed upon you as he did. I marked him well and I know that his whole heart was in the look he gave you."

Again Ariadne pressed her hand upon her bosom, and sighed. Her frame shook, and for a moment there was a pallor upon her face. Presently, however, she recovered herself, and took her attendant by the hand.

"Thalia, I have trusted you always, and I fear not to trust you now. I must see that youth."

"But why, my lady?"

"Never mind. I must see him."

"Ah," said Thalia, shaking her head, "you love the noble Athenian."

"I have no wish to deny it," replied Ariadne. "I do love him," she added, looking up. "I love him with a depth of passion such as I never before even dreamed of. I must see him."

"But why should you see him? If it be as I suspect

—if he returns your ardent love—the meeting can only made you more unhappy. The youth must die on the morrow, and no mortal power can save him."

"Thalia," cried the princess, with clasped hands, "often during my life have I felt the inspiration of more than mortal perception upon me; and I feel it, now. You will say that my great love has misled me, but I do not believe it. Something tells me that the youth can be saved. I see the star of my fate set above his noble brow. If I see him this night the terrible doom may be averted."

"And how can you see him?"

"If you will help me, I think it can be done."

"I will help you, even with my life, dear lady. You have but to state your wishes."

"You are acquainted with the officers of the guard?"

"Yes."

"And you know where the guard take their supper?"

"Yes."

"Would it be a very difficult matter for you to gain access to that apartment before the hour for the evening meal?"

"No. I can do that very easily."

"And would you find much trouble in mixing a sleeping powder with the food those soldiers are to eat?"

The girl rested her head upon her hand and reflected a few moments.

"No," she at length answered. "I can do it with little trouble. Only it must be such a powder as will not be easily detected."

"I will look to that. I think the guard is not changed until midnight."

"It is not changed before that time; and I don't

know as it is changed at all. I know the officers are not changed."

"The officers and men eat together, do they not?"

"Yes, lady—when they eat in the palace."

"Then you may be sharpening your wits, good Thalia, for I have the powder at hand. Already the gods seem to favor me. I obtained this powerful sleeping-potion that I might be armed against the king of Egypt; and now it will serve me a better purpose."

The day was already drawing toward its close, and as the last rays of the setting sun faded from the palace walls Ariadne gave the powder to Thalia, and sent her upon her delicate mission, at the same time begging of her to be very careful.

"For," she said, "I must not fail to see him this night. O Thalia, if you have guessed the truth—if his heart is mine—there shall be found some means to save him from the terrible doom that has been pronounced against him."

Thalia went away, and the princess was left alone. Ah, she had fallen deeply, passionately in love. In all her life before she had never seen a man who came up to the standard she had fixed in her mind; so her heart had been gathering its forces of love, and the fires of warm passion had not fanned to a flame until now. But the hour had come. The god of Love had fixed an arrow in her heart at last, and the passion burst forth with mighty power. She promised herself that the Athenian youth was true and honorable, and that his life would be equal in its fruits to the beauty of his countenance. She had only one fear, and that was that his heart might already be another's. This thought only added to the intensity of her passion; and upon her knees she prayed to the gods that the heart of the noble Athenian might be given wholly to her.

That evening her father did not visit her, so she had plenty of time for reflection, besides being relieved from the difficult task of hiding her real feelings before him. An hour after dark Thalia returned, coming in cautiously, and gazing carefully around before she spoke. She trembled some, and there was a fluttering about her lips, as though the excitement of the business in which she had been engaged had not wholly left her.

"Dear Thalia, we are alone. What have you done?"

The girl sat down and breathed a few moments, and then replied:

"I have done more than you thought to advise. I have given the guard their sleeping-potion, and I have also discovered the situation of the cell in which the youth is confined."

"Ah—I forgot—that. Thank you, Thalia. You are a good friend. You are sure the soldiers will take the food you prepared?"

"I saw them eat it, my lady, so there can be no mistake there. If they do not fall asleep before the proper time—"

"There is no fear of that. I know how the powder works. If the guard have taken it they will be sound asleep by ten o'clock."

The hours dragged heavily on, and when the evening star had set Ariadne prepared for the expedition she had undertaken. When she was sure that all in the palace was quiet, she took a small lantern, which she could darken at pleasure, and set forth. There were many passages to be threaded, and a wide court to cross, before they entered that part of the palace beneath which the dungeons lay; but they reached it at length, and in safety. They entered a spacious apartment, where a lamp was burning, and where they found an officer of the guard asleep. Thalia trembled,

and so did the princess ; but the former trembled with fear, while the latter was moved only by her eagerness.

"Take that lamp," said Ariadne ; "we may want it ; and, besides, the officer will sleep better in the dark."

The girl did as she had been directed, and after this they went on. Ariadne had often wandered through this part of the palace, and she knew the location of the dungeons very well. There were no doors locked, for guards had been posted at all the principal outlets, and these fellows were sound asleep—some sitting and some lying, but all completely oblivious. At length the adventurers reached the lowest depths of the underground structure, where Thalia soon pointed out the cell in which the Athenian was confined. A soldier was asleep close at hand, with his sword and spear upon the pavement by his side. The door of the cell was heavily barred upon the outside, but not locked with a key, so the girls had not much difficulty in removing the obstructions.

Theseus was not asleep. He had slept a few hours early in the evening ; but a strange dream had awakened him, and he now sat upon the edge of his low pallet, meditating upon the events by which he had been brought into his present position. His hope of success, since his landing in Crete, had not been quite so strong as before. Not only had his sword been taken from him, but he had discovered that the labyrinth was a far more wonderful place than he had fancied. When he had laid his head upon the hard pillow that night he had many misgivings ; but he prayed earnestly to the gods to assist him, and while he slept there came to him in a dream a fair presence, bidding him take courage.

"Son of Æthra," the spirit said, "if thy heart is true, and thine arm strong, take courage."

When he would have put forth his hand to detain the presence he awoke, and found himself in utter darkness; but presently the door of his cell was opened and a bright light flashed in upon him.

Was he awake, or did he still dream? He rubbed his eyes, and gazed again. Certainly he had seen that beautiful being before. He had seen her near the king, and her image had not since left him.

Ariadne was the intruder, and she felt that it was her duty to speak. She gazed into the face of the man who had arisen to meet her, and she fancied that he looked more noble than before.

"Fair sir," she said, "be not alarmed by my presence." She would have spoken further, but her voice failed her.

"By the girdle of Venus!" cried the youth, gazing rapturously upon the lovely vision, "thou comest not armed with that which alarms, unless, indeed, Cupid hath lent thee his darts, and thou canst shoot them with deadly effect."

The tones of the speaker so soft and so musical, inspired the maiden with new strength of purpose.

"I am no goddess, that could borrow darts of the mischievous son of Venus," she said, with a smile. "I am Ariadne, the daughter of King Minos."

"Then thou art the maiden whose beauty is so renowned," spoke Theseus. "Ah, the whole truth has not been told."

His eyes beamed with a warmer light, and a richer glow suffused his face.

The royal maiden was not unmindful of that look. It gave her courage to hope that her love was not lost.

"You know my name, fair sir, while I know not yours."

"Pardon, lady. My name is Theseus, and I am the

son of Æthra, the daughter of Pittheus, king of Trœzene. My father I never saw."

"Then thou art of a kingly race upon thy mother's side?" said Ariadne, with a new strength of hope.

"Yes. I was reared and educated at the court of my royal grandfather."

"And do they draw upon such for the tribute which Athens pays to Crete?"

"Nay, lady; my presence here came not by chance. I freely gave myself to the fated number, hoping that I might overcome the terrible beasts of the labyrinth, and thus free my people from the sad burden they have borne so long."

"But did you not think you might fail?"

"Yes,—I thought of it."

"And thus all would be lost."

"Nay, sweet lady. My name would be remembered kindly in Athens—remembered by a noble boy, a widowed mother, and a dark-eyed maiden."

"A maiden!" gasped Ariadne, catching her breath.

"Yes,—a maiden who may live to be the loving wife of the youth whose place I took."

The princess breathed again, and the quick light that broke over her face, dispelling the momentary cloud, was noticed by Theseus.

"Ah, most beautiful of women," he said, almost mournfully, "there is no maiden who will weep for me when I am gone."

"None!" echoed Ariadne, holding her breath.

"None!" answered Theseus.

"And there is no maiden whom you regret to lose?"

The Athenian youth gazed a moment into the face of the princess, and then replied, in low, tender tones:

"Pardon the speech, lady; but justice bids me make it. Until my eyes drank in the loveliness of the daugh-

ter of King Minos my heart was free; but now I am free no longer. If I triumph in the sacred cause I have undertaken, I shall leave Crete with deepest regret if I might leave thee behind. If I fall in the conflict, I shall die more happily because the light of thy smile hath illumined my pathway."

Ariadne pressed her hand upon her beating heart, and rested her head upon the shoulder of Thalia. In a little while she had recovered herself, and when she turned her gaze upon the youth again her beautiful face was aglow with rapturous joy.

"Theseus, how did you hope to overcome the lions of Nubia?"

"I had hoped, lady, that they would have left me my sword; but they have taken it from me."

"And if you had a sword do you think you could conquer?"

"I am sure of it."

"Ah, sir—you know not the terrible power of those beasts."

"Lady, have you ever heard of Procrustes and Periphetes?"

"Do you mean the horrible monsters of the Corinthian Isthmus?"

"Yes."

"I have heard much of them."

"I slew both these giants with my own hand. I should not fear the lions."

"Suppose I were to give you a sword—such an one as you could conceal beneath your robe?"

"Oh, dare I hope!"

"I came to serve you, sir. I can furnish you with a sword; and I can give you a clew by which you may make your way out from the labyrinth when you have overcome the lions."

Theseus sank upon his knees and caught the maiden's hand.

"By the throne of high heaven, I beseech thee," he cried, "tell me if only pity moves thee to this?"

"And suppose it were only pity!"

"I would cast the offer from me with the high hopes that must be crushed!"

"Suppose it were not pity?"

"Oh, let me suppose it to be—LOVE."

"And think ye, Theseus, that the heart of Ariadne cannot be moved? Know, that thy words have been spoken to one who can return in full the solemn pledge of devoted love."

Theseus started up, but Ariadne waved him back, and then turned to her attendant.

"Thalia, hasten thee to my chamber, and bring the sword which my mother gave me. You know where it is."

"Yes, lady."

"And in the box of sandal-wood upon the table beneath the silver mirror, you will find an ivory cup with a golden cover. Bring that also. Take the lantern, and make all haste."

Thalia departed, leaving behind the lamp which had been brought from the guard room.

"Dear lady," said Theseus, when the beautiful face was once more turned toward him, "the gods forbid that this should be a dream! Is my love for thee returned?"

"With all the strength of my being," answered Ariadne. "I never loved until my eyes beheld thee."

"And thou, sweet Ariadne, wert the first to touch my heart with the Erotic dart. But,—I must leave Crete when I come forth from the labyrinth."

"And may not Ariadne go with thee?"

The Athenian youth opened his arms, and the lovely princess of Crete rested upon his bosom.

"Rest here, sweet one!" he cried, as he wound his stout arms about her. "Rest upon this bosom, and fear not. The temple of Vesta never offered safer retreat to the daughters of earth than thou shalt find within these arms. If thou wilt go with me, and be my wife, I will love thee while I live, and I will pray daily to the gods that after we have passed the dark river we may be re-united upon the Elysian shore, there to spend brighter years than earth can give in those happy blessed isles! Dear Ariadne, wilt thou have it so?"

She clung more closely to him, and whispered words that made his heart bound with delirious joy.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LABYRINTH.

Thalia was prompt, and almost before the lovers had realized that she was gone she returned, bearing with her the sword and the ivory cup. Ariadne took the sword and held it for a moment in her hand, as though she hesitated. It was a short, wide bladed, two-edged weapon, with a hilt and guard of solid gold, inlaid with precious stones; the scabbard being of the finest grained wood, richly carved and inlaid.

"Dear Theseus," the princess said, "should this sword fail you against the lions, I should have no wish to live."

"It cannot fail me if the blade is true," replied our hero, confidently.

"I am not much used to the inspection of arms," pursued Ariadne; "but I know that a better blade than this, so far as quality is concerned, cannot be found. My mother was Ino, the daughter of Œneus, King of Calydon. There was a conspiracy once in the kingdom of Calydon, and it was planned that when Œneus could be caught unarmed he should be slain. He learned of the plot, and determined to punish the conspirators with his own hand. He summoned an armorer from Persia, and ordered that a sword should be made, of ordinary weight, but yet so contracted in size that it could be hidden beneath his robe. The armorer set about the work, and when the weapon was finished it was found that even the most obdurate metals were as wood beneath its stroke. The finest tempered armor could not mar its edge, nor could dampness dim the lustre of its polished sides. King Œneus hid this sword beneath his robe, and walked forth alone, as was often his wont. The conspirators, ten in number, attacked him, and he slew them all. My mother was his only child, and when he lay upon his death-bed he gave the sword to her, directing her, if she ever had a son, to give it to him. But my mother had no sons, and she gave the sword to me. And I," the maiden continued, regarding the youth with a look of melting tenderness, "in this first hour of my great joy, give the priceless weapon to thee. And, Oh! may the gods smile propitiously upon thee!"

Theseus took the sword, and as he balanced it in his hand he felt himself again the hero of the Corinthian Isthmus.

"Sweet Ariadne, I am armed now, and I fear not the lions of Nubia. Thy gift shall not fail me."

The tone and bearing of the noble youth inspired the princess with so much confidence that she thought of the wild beasts no more with dread.

"But," she said, "there is one thing more. When you have slain the lions you are not free from the labyrinth."

"Is that labyrinth, then, so intricate?"

"Aye, Theseus. Mortal prowess stands unarmed and helpless in the wonderful mazes of that place. Thousands have sought to make their way out from the inner cave, but never have any succeeded."

"Still, sweet love, I will not despair. Surely the gods are with me."

"So is Ariadne with thee, noble Theseus; and she can help thee still." She turned and took the ivory cup from her attendant, and having removed the golden cover she found what she desired.

"Here," she continued, returning to her lover, "is a ball of silk. The thread is as fine as the web of a spider and yet so strong that it cannot be easily broken. When you reach the entrance to the labyrinth you will be blindfolded; but that will be no hindrance. You can easily allow the end of this thread to become entangled in the shrubbery, and as you are led on you can let the ball revolve in your hand, thereby leaving behind you a sure guide when you wish to retrace your steps."

"Verily, the gods are smiling upon me!" cried Theseus, as he took the silken ball; "and thou, blessed one, art the messenger Heaven hath vouchsafed to send unto me."

At this point Thalia touched her mistress' arm, and reminded her that the hour of midnight was close at hand.

"Aye," murmured Ariadne, "I know I must tear myself away."

"If there is danger to thee in remaining here, haste away at once," said Theseus. "Only tell me how we shall meet again."

"I will look to that," replied the princess. "If you come forth safely from the labyrinth, the king will set you free at once; and after that you will wait until you hear from me. O remember, my love, that Ariadne's life hangs upon thy fate!"

Once more she rested upon the bosom of her lover, and when he had kissed her upon the brow, and whispered more words of hope and cheer, she released herself from his embrace, and followed Thalia from the cell. The door was bolted and barred as they had found it, and without awakening any of the sentinels they reached their own apartments.

The guard should have been changed at midnight, but it was not; still the king was not to know that his soldiers had slept upon their posts, for the officer who had charge of the guards had himself slept, and when he awoke, and found the morning star already up, he did not deem it prudent to make a report of the remissness of his men, since such a report would of necessity make public his own shortcoming. So Minos imagined that his prisoners had been under the watchful care of sleepless sentinels all night.

When the princess reached her chamber she sank down upon a low stool and rested her head in Thalia's lap.

"Good Thalia, perhaps you think I have done wrong?"

"I do not see how you could have done otherwise than you did, dear lady. It would have been very unsafe to have brought the youth away from the dungeon."

"You do not understand me. I meant that perhaps you would think I ought not to have seen Theseus at all."

"Mercy! How can such an idea dwell in your thoughts! How could you help seeing him?"

"I could have remained away from him," said the princess, reluctantly.

"And thereby directly opposed the will of the gods," replied Thalia, promptly. "Don't think such things, my dear lady. You have a safe guide in the future. If Theseus overcomes the terrible lions, even with the sword you have given him, will it not be proof enough that your work is blessed of heaven?"

"Ah; but if he does not overcome the lions!"

"We will think of that when we have need; but for the present let us think of brighter things. I believe he will not fail. Did you ever behold such magnificence of manhood before? He is as beautiful as Apollo, and as powerful as a Cyclops. The richness of flowery spring is his, and his breath is as the sweetest zephyr. His words are like the words of a god, and his voice is like heavenly music. His eyes are like the evening lamps of Hesperus, and his brow is fit to wear the crown of nations!"

Ariadne sighed as her attendant ceased speaking, and her further thoughts of the Athenian youth were soon softened into pleasant dreams.

On the following morning all work was suspended in the Cretan capital, and at an early hour the people began to gather in the streets leading to the palace. At the appointed hour Minos gave directions to have the victims brought forth, and, one by one, they were led again before the king.

When the prisoners were first led from their cells, upon beholding each other again they began to sob and weep; but Theseus bade them take courage and bear up.

"I know," said he, "the dangers we have to encoun-

ter, and I am prepared to meet them. I shall go first into the labyrinth, and if death comes I must be the first victim. But I do not think I shall die. Last night a blessed messenger from the gods visited me in my cell, and gave me assurance that my prayers should be answered; and you know the burden of those prayers. We may yet behold the shores of Attica again."

Not only the words of the hero, but his tone and bearing of confidence, gave to the doomed ones new hope, and they walked forth from the palace with calm and dignified look. Minos was surprised when he saw them; and the Egyptian king, who sat by his side, wondered how those doomed maidens could be so resigned in the presence of such a terrible fate.

"It must be," said Minos, "that the bearing of that comely youth who leads the van inspires them with resolution."

Serapis nodded assent, and once more proposed to purchase the youth spoken of; but Minos shook his head. He could not listen.

The nearest route to the labyrinth was by water, so the victims were led down to the seashore, where they were embarked upon a galley in which were a hundred soldiers. The king's galley followed next, and after that came a score of vessels of all sorts and sizes. Ere long the lofty peak of Mount Ida loomed up in sight, and at the end of two hours the vessels landed. The victims were conducted through a thick wood, after passing which they came to the base of one of the huge spurs of rock that shot off from the mountain. Theseus, who was led in advance, saw the mouth of a cavern yawning close at hand, and he asked a soldier by his side if they were to enter there. The soldier nodded in the affirmative. Shortly after this the procession stopped, and the eyes of the Athenians were closely

bandaged, and their arms securely bound behind them. While this was being done King Minos addressed them as follows :

" Youths and maidens of Athens, it is with no pleasure that I now consign you to your fate. Your king made war upon Crete, and shed much blood. The gods gave me victory over him, and I intended to lay Athens in ashes, and put its inhabitants to the sword ; but Ægeus prevailed upon me to soften my decree of vengeance, and take instead a yearly tribute such as this which now comes to me. But even now Athens has a chance for redemption. If you can overcome the twelve lions that roam through the labyrinth, and after that make your way back to the outer world, your lives are yours, and Athens is free henceforth from the heavy burden."

As the king ceased speaking, the victims were led forward toward the mouth of the cavern. Theseus had contrived, during the time that his arms were being tied behind him, to hold the ball of silk in his hand, and when he felt the shrubbery brush against him he let fall the end of the thread, and very soon he had the satisfaction of knowing that it had become entangled in the rubbish over which he trod.

Slowly the dismal procession moved on, turning and winding constantly—now through the depths of some dark, damp cavern—now through some rocky chamber of higher altitude—now in the open air, where the wind sighed through thick branches—now hemmed in by solid walls, and now through a maze of shrubs, the sharp thorns of which pricked the flesh of those who stepped aside—all the while turning and twisting, until they were almost dizzy.

At length the Athenians were allowed to stop, and the hands of their conductors were removed. Theseus

listened attentively, and he fancied that he heard stealthy footsteps, as though those who had led them thither were creeping away.

"Glaucis," he said, turning toward his companions.

"I am here," replied the youth who had walked next to our hero. He was the child of an Athenian officer, and one of the bravest and best of the sons of Hellas.

"I think our conductors have left us," pursued Theseus.

"If they have," added Glaucis, with some show of concern, "we had better get rid of our bonds as soon as possible."

"We can readily accomplish that," replied Theseus. "Let us stand back to back, and while you cast off the bond from my arm, I will do the same for you."

The thing was quickly done, and when our hero had removed the bandage from his eyes, and assured himself that his sword was safe, he dropped his ball of silk upon the ground, and then assisted in freeing the rest of his companions. The place in which they found themselves was a sort of amphitheatre, a part of the wall being of solid rock, while the rest was of masonry. There were two outlets, one upon the right hand, and one upon the left. Through the passage upon the right could be seen green foliage; but the other was dark and uncertain.

"By which of these ways did we enter?" asked Glaucis.

"We came in that way," replied Theseus, pointing to the dark passage.

"How do you know?"

"I know!" was our hero's simple answer; and it was sufficient to settle the matter. None of his companions had discovered the silken thread which had guided him in his decision, for it was so fine that the

uninitiated would be most likely, even if they noticed it, to mistake it for the web of a spider.

The seven maidens were all of them fair to look upon, and in the bond of that common doom they were as sisters one to another, and the youths were to them as brothers. A solemn sense of the noble sacrifice they were fated to make in behalf of their native city calmed down those passions which else might have ripened into love, and they were like the children of one household. But all looked to Theseus as to an elder brother, and the maidens drew near unto him, as though he alone could save them from harm.

"Shall we remain here, or shall we go on?" said one of the youths.

"We will seek some other place," returned Theseus.

"We will go and see how yonder grove appears," suggested Glaucis.

"No," said the son of Æthra. "Let us go no farther into the mazes of this labyrinth than we have been led. We came in by this dark passage, and by that we will go out."

None opposed him, and having picked up the silken ball and put it into his pocket, he led the way. The passage was narrow and dark, and seemed to have been cut through the solid rock; but at length an abrupt turn brought them out into daylight again, and they now stood upon a grassy cushion, some twenty paces in diameter, which was surrounded, as the amphitheatre had been, partly by the native rock and partly by a wall of masonry. From this place there were no less than ten passages, all leading in different directions.

"Mercy!" cried one of the youths, "who shall tell us which of these ways to take?"

"I think I can select it," replied Theseus, whose quick eye had detected the silken thread.

Before further remark could be made a sound broke upon the air which caused brave men to quake with terror. It was a roar, long, loud, and terrible, increasing in volume until the very mountain shook.

"O ye gods! the lions have been let loose!" gasped the maiden Andromeda.

Theseus held up his finger and bent his ear to listen. The monsters were not far away!

CHAPTER X.

WHAT THESEUS DID.

It was soon evident that the lions had scented their prey. Their roaring was eager and persistent, and the poor victims fancied that they could hear the gnashing of the deadly teeth.

"We can do nothing," said Glaucis. "We are dead to Athens forever."

"We will kneel here, and close our eyes to the horrible sight," murmured Andromeda.

"Wait," said Theseus. "If the lions come all together, our fate may be a hard one; but if they have order in their coming, and come not too fast, we may escape."

"It cannot be," returned Glaucis. "The gods are not with us; and surely no human power can withstand the monsters."

As Glaucis ceased speaking a roar more terrific than any which had preceded it rent the air, and a cry of alarm went up from the affrighted maidens. Andromeda, with two others, sank upon her knees and bowed

her head, while the rest, with three of the youths, fled toward some of the narrow dark passages.

Again the awful roar shook the mountain, and presently a lion appeared, emerging from one of the passes. He was a huge beast, his thick black mane giving him a look of fearful majesty, while his eyes gleamed like balls of fire. He lashed his sides with his sweeping tail, and his foam-dripping teeth were exposed, ready for the work of death. Theseus threw his mantle from his shoulders and wound it closely about his left arm; and then he drew the sword which Ariadne had given him.

"My brothers," he cried, as he felt the glad weight of the priceless weapon, and glanced his eye along its keen, sure edge, "you see that the gods have not entirely forsaken us. Stand as you are and leave this beast to me."

With bold, fearless step the son of Æthra approached the lion, and when he had come to within a few paces he stopped. The king of beasts had evidently never witnessed anything of the kind before, for he gave a startled growl and moved back a pace. When he met the keen, fixed glance of Thesus' eye he crouched low down, as though he would wait until that glance was removed before he advanced. There were other lions close at hand, and our hero knew there was no time to lose. He saw that the beast before him was puzzled, and the moment of this uncertainty must be taken advantage of. He marked the spot where he would strike, and then he called on the gods to help him. As though in answer to this prayer, the lion turned his gaze upon the kneeling maidens, and on that instant Theseus advanced his left arm and sprang forward. The beast fixed his terrible jaws upon the thick swathing, but he did not close them with full power, for the broad-bladed

sword was buried to its hilt in his throat, the point having gone through his heart. In a few moments Theseus shook the teeth of the dying monster from his arm, and arose to his feet.

"One of the twelve is slain," he said, as he wiped his dripping blade upon the mane of the prostrate beast.

"But the sword—the sword," cried Glaucis. "Whence came it?"

"It came from the hands of a blessed spirit," replied our hero; "and if the gods did not instigate the gift, I verily believe they smiled upon the deed."

There was no time for further remark, for at that moment another lion made his appearance. He was larger than the first and came with more ferocity; but when he met the keen flash of Theseus' eye he stopped, and his mane drooped.

"See," exclaimed the son of Æthra, without removing his fixed gaze; "these beasts cannot understand the look of a bold, determined man. The quivering frightened wretch would be as nothing in their jaws, and such have they been wont to meet."

Theseus felt full confidence in his own prowess, aided by the gift of Ariadne; and when he saw the lion crouching lower down before him, he boldly advanced; but this time he did not offer his arm; he leaped upon the lion's back, at the same instant plunging the stout blade through the spine of the neck. The beast leaped from beneath his enemy, and fell dead at the feet of Andromeda. The youths and maidens, when they saw this second monster slain, began to take courage; and they now looked upon Theseus as something more than mortal.

But there was no time for rest. The lions had discovered the whereabouts of their prey, and were moving towards the spot. The third made his appearance while

the cry of terror was yet upon Andromeda's lips, coming in where the first had come. He stopped as he emerged from the narrow passage, and gazed around as though he would select for himself the daintiest morsel offered. Presently, however, he caught Theseus' eye and hesitated. He had met his master and he seemed to know it, for his growling ceased, and his tail stopped its lashing. This time Theseus stooped down and offered the bandaged arm; but before the gleaming teeth could be set upon it, the keen sword, cutting the air like a flash of light, was buried in his vitals.

"There are but nine left," cried our hero, as he once more arose to his feet. "Oh, my brothers, forget not the gods in this hour of need."

Another, and another of the hungry beasts came, and Theseus was ready to meet them. His heart fainted not; his arm failed not; and his trusty sword was true to its aim. Eight of the lions came into that amphitheatre, and there they died. There were four more, and their eager roars could be distinctly heard, though they were evidently at some distance.

"We will wait here no longer," said Theseus, "for it is now past noon,—aye, it must be well on towards the close of the day,—and the other lions may not come this way until after dark. These beasts have evidently been in the habit of having their prey rush into their deadly jaws, and they think that some of us, in our terror, must surely come their way. Follow me, and we shall be likely soon to find them."

"We must trust to fate in our selection from these passages," remarked Glaucis, gazing around with a bewildered look.

"Fear not," replied Theseus. "The kind spirit which hath helped us thus far will not desert us while the son of Æthra lives. Follow me."

Our hero had seen his silken thread running away into one of the narrowest of the passages—a pass from which four of the lions had emerged—and having moved to that point he picked up the clue, and prepared to proceed. Some of the maidens would have shrank from the dark passage, but the assurance of their leader gave them courage, and they followed on. There were many windings, and more than once did Glaucis and his companions express the fear that they were going wrong; but their guide simply bade them follow on while their feet found open space before them. At length they reached another amphitheatre, and just as the maidens were following the youths into the opening, a huge lion made his appearance on the opposite side.

"Look," cried Theseus, pointing with his sword. "See how the beast quails before us. These monsters, so terrible when their presence strikes the victim with palsy, are not so openly bold when upright man meets them without fear."

"Ah," suggested Glaucis, "the beast sees the sharp sword, and that surprises him."

"I think not," answered Theseus. "The brute knows not the power of this weapon. He simply waits for us to turn our backs."

"But," pursued Glaucis, "should your sword fail you, even for an instant, the lion would kill you."

"Yes," admitted our hero; "because the weapons which nature has given him are more effective than the simple hands of mortal man. But we are not cast upon that chance. Behold!"

The youthful hero leaped upon the crouching lion and drove the faithful blade deep into the seat of his life. Once the monster gained his feet after the blade

had fallen, but Theseus threw him back by mai strength, and plunged the sword again into his body.

A second lion made its appearance in that sam place, and he was slain as the other had been ; afte which Theseus picked up the silken thread, and move on again. The voices of the two remaining lions wer plainly heard, but they had no more terrors for th Athenians. Ere long Theseus met one of the savag brutes in a narrow passage, and without the least hes tation he advanced until within two paces of the anima When the lion saw the steady advance, and met th keen gaze of the hero, he seemed to be stricken wit enervating surprise ; and when he found the man s near upon him, he turned about, and would have fled but Theseus sprang quickly forward, and struck him furious blow behind the right shoulder. At this th lion faced his antagonist again, but a second blow com pletely disabled him.

"Oh, ye gods!" cried Glaucis, "vouchsafe thine ai to the end! There is but one more lion ; and may h fall as his mates have fallen."

"Fear not for the result," said Theseus. "I am jus beginning to feel in mood for the sport. King Mino must find something more powerful than lions if h would finish the doom of the conqueror of Procruste and Periphetes. Hark! The twelfth lion is not fa off."

And so it proved. In a small opening the last lio was met. He came with savage growl and glaring eyes evidently surprised to see what a feast his companion had left for him. For a few moments he stood viewing the scene, and then he turned towards the maidens probably thinking that they would make the most deli cate meal to begin with. But he was not destined t taste the delicious repast. Theseus, like a thunder-bol

from the hand of Jove, leaped upon the monster's back, and drove home the sharp sword, separating the spine close by where it entered the skull.

"Now, thanks be to the gods, we have the way open before us!" cried our hero, as he wiped his sword and returned it to its sheath.

"And who shall lead us out?" asked Glaucis.

"I will," replied Theseus. "Interrupt me not, but follow close behind me."

On went the guide, gathering up the silken thread as he advanced; turning and winding; now in total darkness beneath the roof of some deep cavern; then groping along a narrow pass which threatened to close up at every step; and anon opening into some amphitheatre. Several times did they catch glimpses of verdant foliage through passages upon the right hand and upon the left, but not yet had Theseus' clue led him into any such place. His companions had begged of him to go by such inviting ways, but he had steadily refused. At length, as they were traversing a desolate chamber of rock, from which there were many ways of egress, Glaucis espied, through an opening directly ahead, a beautiful garden in which were all manner of fruits, shrubs, and flowers.

"Let us go that way! Let us go that way!" he urged.

And others seconded his request.

"Brothers," said Theseus, "if it will please you to view yonder verdant spot, we will go thither and feast our eyes; but, remember, we have not much time to waste."

"But the garden may be the true way," returned Glaucis. "Who knows but we may here find ourselves free."

"We shall see," answered Theseus; and thus speak-

ing he took the ball of silk from his pocket, and having fastened an end of the thread to one of the rocks at his feet, he allowed it to unwind as he proceeded.

The garden was found to be more beautiful than had even been supposed. There were fruit trees in blossom, and fruit trees laden with fruit fully ripened. There were flowers in the bud, and flowers in full bloom ; and there were sweet-scented herbs, and shrubs of various kinds. There were also trees of larger growth, within the branches of which sang many a sweet-voiced bird.

"My good Glaucis," said Theseus, "you shall now take the lead, and pilot us through this garden. Go on, —we will follow thee."

Glaucis would have refused this distinguished post ; but, seeing that the garden had been visited at his suggestion, he could not well resign the proffered place ; so he took the lead, and wandered off through the broadest path that presented itself, Theseus bringing up the rear. By and by the end of the garden was reached, and Glaucis found himself confronted by a perpendicular wall of solid rock. Near at hand stood a tall tree, and having climbed to the top of this he discovered that the garden was of irregular shape, and shut in on all hands by a wall over which even his then elevated position would not permit him to look. He came down and reported what he had seen.

"If such is the case," said one of the youths, "you had better lead us back to where Theseus had brought us."

Glaucis said he would do so at once ; and thereupon he started to retrace his steps ; but in a very short time he found himself at fault. He came to a point where three paths, exactly alike, led off in different directions. He took the middle one, and when he reached

the wall of rock he discovered before him several cavernous openings like the one from which they emerged.

"Forgive me!" he cried, when he had assured himself that he was utterly lost. "Let Theseus take the lead and I will offer no more remonstrance."

With a smile our hero once more placed himself at the head of the party, and his first movement thereafter was to turn back to the centre of the garden, from which point he took a new course, and soon led the way to another section of the wall. Here, as before, there were found numerous cavernous openings, but the guide did not hesitate. He entered one of them, and ere long they stood where they had stood before Glaucis drew them away.

"Now," said Theseus, after he had secured his clue, "we must waste no more time. The day is well-nigh spent, and I would be free from this labyrinth before the night comes. Trust in me and I will lead you forth in safety."

"Lead on," they cried, with one accord. "We have full faith in thee."

Slowly but surely the son of Æthra pursued the devious way, and several times he reached places which his companions were sure had been passed before.

"This place I know we have once before visited," said Glaucis, as they stood within a broad cavern where pillars of grey basalt supported the roof.

And so it had appeared to Theseus; but he was sure that he held the silken thread in his hand, and he consequently knew that he had made no mistake.

"It is one of the mysteries of this mysterious labyrinth," he said, as his followers hesitated. "Let your eyes follow my steps, and trust not to the appearances about you."

Again they followed him, and at length they reached

a dark, dismal cavern, damp and miasmatic, from the unseen depths of which came the startling hisses of lizards and snakes.

"On! on!" cried Theseus. "Faint not here; for, if I mistake not, we are near to the outer world."

Feeling carefully for the silken clue, he groped his way through the dense blackness of the noisome place, and finally he found himself in a narrow pass, at the far end of which he saw a faint glimmering of light.

On, on he went, his companions following close behind him, and in a little while they emerged from the dark cavern, and stood where they had stood before their eyes had been bandaged by the officers of King Minos. The sun had gone, and the stars were beginning their course in the heavens.

Down upon their knees sank the Athenians; and the gods must have been reckless indeed if they did not receive with smiles the return of thank offerings which ascended from the lips and hearts of those delivered mortals who knelt on that evening beneath the shadows of Mount Ida.

CHAPTER XI.

SOMETHING IS MISSED IN CRETE.

The morning was bright and beautiful, and Minos, king of Crete, with Serapis, king of Egypt, enjoyed the fresh breeze that swept over the walls of the palace from the sea. Serapis now urged that the lovely Ariadne should be given to him for his wife, and Minos offered no objections.

"I think," said Serapis, "that the maiden does not et love me ; but, if what you say be true,—if she had ever loved another—I shall not despair."

"What I have told thee I know," replied Minos, con- dently. "My daughter's heart is not another's."

"Then, my brother," pursued the Egyptian, "let us nish the business at once. If the princess is to be my ife, why not make her so at once, and then I can re- ırn to my kingdom when I please."

"By the life of my body, Serapis," answered Minos, rankly and earnestly, "you shall name the hour."

"What hour better than the present ? Remember, linos, the time to come is not ours."

"As you will, so it shall be."

"Then I will that the hand of the princess Ariadne ıall be given unto me now."

"Good Serapis, I like the plan. She is already prom- ed to thee, and the event is expected. I will summon ıe chief men of the city, and the priests of the temple, ıd the ceremony shall forwith go on. But you must ot leave us in haste. Let us enjoy the light of thy resence some days yet."

"That cannot well be, my brother. My kingdom is rge, and my presence is needed in my capital. Still, will not hasten away without sufficient cause."

Minos dispatched messengers after the priests and ıe chief men of the city, and then he sought his aughter, whom he found alone in her chamber.

"Where is your attendant ?" he asked.

Ariadne hesitated, and before she could reply Thalia ame in through one of the open windows.

"How !" cried the king, in amazement ; "do you ander about upon the walls of the palace ?"

"I have been out upon the roof to get a breath of esh air," replied the girl.

"Have a care for thyself, foolish child. Know that none save sentinels should venture upon the watch-towers."

Then the king turned to Ariadne and informed her of the arrangement he had made. She was about to sink upon her knees at her father's feet, but he prevented her.

"Daughter," he said, with a frown that made his face look terrible, "I can listen to no more objections. You belong to the king of Egypt, and the seal must be quickly set upon your brow. Your attendants will be sent to you, and in one hour you will appear in the marble hall, where rests the throne of Crete."

With these words the king withdrew; and when he was gone, and the door had been closed behind him, Ariadne clasped her hands, and raised her eyes toward heaven.

"Oh, ye gods!" she cried, "deliver me from this great evil!"

"And if the gods do not deliver you, what will you do?" asked Thalia.

"I shall be dishonored if I become the wife of the king of Egypt," replied the princess; "for I—"

She stopped, and pressed her hands over her heart.

"I was going to say," she added, "that I am solemnly pledged to the hero of Attica; but, alas! where is he?"

"I could see nothing from the tower, my lady. Yet he may be safe, though—"

"Though you cannot believe it," said Ariadne, helping her attendant out with the sentence.

"You have spoken my thought, dear lady. When I think of the dangers of that terrible labyrinth, I cannot believe that mortal man can meet them and live."

"Enough," uttered the princess, controlling herself by a mighty effort. "Let the worst come. I am pre-

pared. I must obey my father at present; but the dark Egyptian shall never bear me from these shores; nor shall he possess me for a wife. If my beloved has passed to the shadowy vale, I will follow him. Now go, good Thalia, and prepare to accompany me to the marble hall. So far as my father has power to force me, I must go, and those who see me upon the way he leads shall not see the spirit of grief that moves within me. I will bear myself as becomes a princess of Crete while those eyes are upon me. If I am calm and resigned, it is because the conviction is strong in my soul that the gods will not forsake my beloved. Now hasten, and be with me when I go to my father."

From that moment Ariadne was firm. She knew that she could not successfully oppose her father in this first step; but she was resolved, come what might, that she would never go to Egypt with Serapis. She arrayed herself in her richest attire, and at the appointed time the waiting-women were with her to conduct her to the great hall.

The marble hall of king Minos' palace was in the centre of the structure, the walls, and the roof, and the pillars being all of the whitest and purest marble. About the throne were twelve pilasters of amethyst, and the hangings were of purple cloth, elaborately adorned with gold and precious stones. Minos was in the chair of state, and upon his right hand sat the king of Egypt, while upon the pavement below were assembled the priests and the chief men of the city.

An exclamation of admiration burst from the lips of the Egyptian as he saw Ariadne enter the hall. She was indeed resplendantly lovely, outshining her attendants as the full moon outshines the stars that gather about her way.

"By the gods Osiris and Isis," cried Serapis, "I

never beheld such beauty before! A new light will shine in my palace; and as I bask in its warmth of love I shall remember with deepest gratitude the king of Crete. The enemies of Minos shall be the enemies of Serapis, and Minos' friends shall be his friends."

This speech pleased the Cretan king, and he forthwith commanded his daughter to approach the throne. The maiden had taken but a single step in answer to this summons when the proceedings were interrupted by the hasty and unceremonious entrance of Galbo, the keeper of the labyrinth.

"Ha, Galbo," cried Minos, impatiently, "what means this unseemly intrusion?"

"Sire," replied the keeper, advancing and kneeling at the foot of the throne, "I have news of the utmost importance to communicate."

"Speak, speak, Galbo. What is it?"

"Sire, your lions are all slain, and the Athenians are free."

"No, no," exclaimed Minos. "Not all the lions."

"Yes, sire. I have seen the twelve bodies."

"But the Athenians have not found their way out from the labyrinth."

"Yes, sire; and even now they are in the court of your palace."

"Then by the gods!" cried king Minos, starting to his feet, "there must have been some treachery. They must have had some guide."

"Sire, they could have had no human guide."

At this juncture one of the aged priests stepped forth and addressed the king:

"Sire, wonder not that this thing hath been done. It hath been told to us that Attica should produce a son who should free his people from the burden of that terrible tribute."

"Galbo," spoke the monarch, "who led the Athenians forth from the labyrinth?"

"The youth called Theseus, sire."

"Bring him hither at once." And having given this order, Minos turned to the place where stood his daughter surrounded by her attendants. Had he been less occupied by the startling announcement of the keeper he might have noticed the wonderful effect which was apparent upon the face of the princess; but he had no thought then of such things.

"Ariadne, you may retire for the present—you and your attendants."

Then he turned to Serapis:

"My royal brother, you will pardon me for this delay, but I must see these Athenians. By the King of Heaven there is something mysterious in this."

"So there is," responded Serapis; "and I am curious to know the secret. A few hours of waiting, under such circumstances, will not make the peerless maiden less welcome to my arms."

The princess did not wait for a second command from her father. She hastened away, and before she reached her private chamber she dismissed all her attendants save Thalia.

"What now?" asked the serving-girl, as the door closed behind them.

"To my beloved!" cried Ariadne, with determined expression. "I now have a goal before me. Listen to me, Thalia, and be ready to obey." And with this she placed her hand upon her attendant's arm, and began to explain what she would have done.

In the meantime King Minos waited anxiously for the appearance of the Athenians; and when they came in, Theseus walked directly to the throne.

"Thou art Theseus, the Athenian?" said Minos,

viewing the noble proportions of the youth with an expression that partook more of envy than it did of admiration, though he could not repress all of the latter emotion.

"My name is Theseus, and I am of Athens," replied our hero. Those who stood around were moved by the sound of that voice as they might have been moved by a sudden strain of sweet, majestic music.

"My keeper tells me that the twelve lions of the labyrinth are dead. Who slew them?"

"I slew them, sire."

"How didst thou slay them."

"With a weapon which was upon my person when I entered the labyrinth—a short, sharp blade which I carried beneath my dress."

"But thy companions helped thee?"

"No, sire; there was no need. I gave myself to this work, fully believing that the gods would bear me out. I was a voluntary member of the tributary band, and it was my purpose to lift the fearful burden from Athens. I have only done what I believed I was destined to do."

"But the labyrinth," cried Minos, betraying some excitement; "how did you thread those intricate masses so successfully? Did you not have some assistance from one who knew the secrets of the place?"

"I think I did, sire."

"Ha! then there has been treachery!"

"I think, sire, that I must have received the assistance of some god or goddess. A bright presence, as beautiful as Venus, and with wisdom like Minerva, appeared to me at midnight, while I lay in your dungeon, and gave to me the understanding which enabled me to come forth from the depths of the wonderful labyrinth. More than this, sire, I cannot tell thee."

Minos turned to the Egyptian king and asked him what he thought of it.

"To me," replied Serapis, "it is very evident that the Athenian youth hath had the assistance of heaven, and it would be unwise to detain him."

"You are right, my brother. The hand of an immortal is in the work, and I have no desire to interfere. I will at once send the Athenians on board their ship, and allow them to return to their native land. We will see them off, and then the nuptials shall be celebrated."

Minos arose and announced to the Athenians that they were free, and that they should return to their ship as soon as they had partaken of refreshment. Then he sent for his heralds, and directed that they should proclaim through all Crete that the tribute from Athens was to be paid no more.

Theseus and his companions were conducted to the banqueting hall, where provisions in abundance were placed before them, and when they had eaten sufficient the king met them in the court.

"Athenians," he said, "not on my account shall you hasten away from Crete. We are to have festivities here, and your presence would please us."

Theseus spoke in reply :

"Sire, it would give us equal pleasure to remain with you were it not that in our native land there are many anxious ones, whose hearts now bleed, and who shall be comforted when we return. And yet I have one favor to ask. May we not go on board our ship, and there rest until the night cometh ; for I have taken a vow that I would not spread the sails for our return until Hesperus was prepared to light the way."

"Surely, noble Theseus," answered Minos, with a gracious inclination of the head, "I can refuse thee no

favor of that kind. The waters of our harbor are free, and your ship may rest therein as long as it may please you."

The Cretan monarch accompanied the Athenians to the landing, and before they left he gave to Theseus a message for Ægeus, King of Athens, setting forth the things that had been done, and also proclaiming the freedom of the Attic city from further tribute of human life. Theseus promised to deliver the message, after which he reminded Minos that when he arrived in Crete he had a sword with him which he could not afford to lose.

"You will find every article on board your ship," returned the king.

With this assurance our hero bade Minos farewell, and then directed his companions to go into the boat which was waiting for them. They were all in, and Minos had departed; and yet Theseus did not leave the land.

"What wait ye for?" asked Glaucis.

Theseus made no reply, but continued to gaze around, as though something of importance were missing. Presently a boy came towards him, and called him by name.

"Do you see yonder rock!" asked the lad, as he came near.

Theseus looked in the direction pointed out, and replied that he saw it.

"Be there when the stars are lighted. Ariadne sends the word."

And with this the messenger turned and hastened away, but not until Theseus had recognized the features of the girl who had accompanied the princess to his dungeon.

"I am ready now," he cried, as he stepped down and leaped into the boat. "I was waiting to see if there

might not be some further message from Crete to Athens."

When they reached the ship their crew welcomed them back with shouts of joy; and upon going into the cabin they found everything which had been taken from them. Theseus waited impatiently for the sun to disappear, and as soon as the stars began to twinkle in the heavens he caused his boat to be manned by four of his own companions, and having taken his seat at the helm, he steered for the rock which had been pointed out to him. As soon as the prow touched the shore he leaped forth, and called the name of the princess.

"Ariadne," he cried, in eager tones, "art thou here to bless me?"

"I have not yet proved false, dear Theseus," replied the maiden, moving forward from the shadow of the rock.

"And wilt thou go with me to Greece, sweet love? Wilt thou leave thy home in Crete, and trust thy future with me?"

"I do but flee from oppression when I leave these shores," the princess replied, as she rested upon the bosom of her lover. "Oh, Theseus, thou wilt never cease to love me!"

"Never, blessed one. If I forget thee may these lips turn to stone, and this heart which now beats so rapturously in my bosom become a consuming fire. Come, sweet love,—the joys of more than mortal experience await us. My life is thine and I freely dedicate it to thee."

Without more words Ariadne and Thalia were assisted into the boat, and when they reached the ship, and the boat had been secured, the sails were spread, and the helmsman, with the bright stars for his guide, steered towards Greece.

And these stars were not observed alone by the helmsman. Theseus and Ariadne remained upon the deck until late in the evening, where they renewed their pledges of love, and built bright dwellings for the future joy that was in store for them. When they finally went below, Theseus gave the princess over to the keeping of the Athenian maidens, who, when they knew she had armed the hero for the work of their redemption, took her to their warmest and most devoted friendship and sisterly affection.

* * * * *

There was commotion in the royal palace of the king of Crete. The priests, and the chief men of the capital, were assembled again in the marble hall to witness the nuptials of Serapis and Ariadne ; but Ariadne could not be found. Minos went himself to her apartments, but he could find neither his daughter nor the slave-girl Thalia. Every chamber in the palace was searched, and even the dungeons beneath were explored. The day departed, and the evening came. Through all the city Minos sent word of his loss, and directed that every nook and corner should be explored.

At length there came a whisper to the ear of the king that the princess had gone away in the Athenian ship. Some fishermen had seen a boat put off from that vessel, and come to the shore, and they were sure that when the boat returned two females went in it. Then Minos remembered how his daughter had gazed upon the Attic hero when she saw him on the day of his arrival ; and he also remembered how she had been affected when news came that he had escaped from the Labyrinth. Proof upon proof accumulated until there could be no longer a doubt.

Where was the Athenian ship?

She had been gone several hours, and was now far at sea.

It was near midnight when Minos collected his warriors and ordered his ships to be got in readiness with all possible haste. He would pursue the treacherous Athenian, and put him to death, even though he had to land upon the shores of Hellas to do it.

And the Egyptian monarch declared that he would also go, and bring back his promised bride.

CHAPTER XII.

THESEUS MAKES A DISCOVERY.

Early in the morning of the fourth day the ship reached the Piræus, and Theseus, anxious to see Clio and Cassander, and learn how it was with his mother, left Ariadne in the care of the Athenian maidens, intending to proceed at once to Athens. He told Glaucis that he would return in a few hours; or if they desired to enter the city before his return he would meet them on the way.

"Only a few hours," he said to Ariadne, as he held her to his bosom. "I know not if my mother lives, for she was sick when I left her; and I would learn of her before we are swallowed up in the general commotion which must follow the intelligence of our arrival. You will be safe in the companionship of these fair damsels."

"I would not detain you from the holy mission," replied Ariadne; "but you must not be long away. I shall feel the weight of suspense until you return."

"Not long, not long," said Theseus. "May the good spirits care for thee until I come back."

He kissed her, and turned away; and the princess, when she saw him pass from the ship, heaved a deep sigh and rested her head upon Thalia's bosom.

"Oh, the gods grant that no evil befall my beloved!"

"How can evil befall him in his native land?" returned Thalia. "Will not the people bless and protect him?"

"But there may be bad men in Athens. There may be selfish, envious men, who like not to see the love of the people bestowed upon others than themselves."

"Hush, dear lady. Let not this first absence of your lover affect you thus."

"I am hopeful, Thalia; but—Oh, I should die if harm befall him."

At that point Andromeda and her companions came forward, and under the influence of their glad voices Ariadne in a measure recovered her lost spirits; but she could not feel wholly easy. A shadow had fallen across her way, and she could not entirely dissipate it.

Theseus had selected a course which was quite natural under the circumstances. As the sun was not up when the anchor was cast, he believed that he could go to the city, and return, before the people would begin to collect at the landing. He had a great anxiety to see Orestes, the silversmith, in order that he might learn something of Clio and Cassander, and he wished to see those two men that he might learn of his mother. He wished to know if his mother were well, and he furthermore wished to ask her concerning his father. If it were a possible thing he would know the secret of his birth before he presented himself to the people of Athens in the new character which his success at Crete had given him.

The first beams of day were shooting up over the mountains of Kalybea as our hero placed his foot upon the shore, and in such haste was he that he did not stop to notice a score of men who came towards the boat from an old building that stood near the water. Had he remained within hearing he would have discovered that these men approached the boat, and that they conversed with the oarsmen ; and he would have heard them ask questions concerning the youths and maidens who had been sent to the labyrinth of Crete ; and he would have heard that the oarsmen told all that they knew of the wonderful deliverance that had been wrought. Then he might have heard the strangers ask very particularly after the youth who had volunteered to go to Crete as one of the victims ; and he would have seen the oarsmen point towards Athens, and reply that the hero had but just gone, alone and on foot in that direction.

But Theseus heard nothing of all this. He pursued his course with rapid step, thinking only of reaching the city and returning as soon as possible. He had arrived at a point where the road made an abrupt turn around a thicket of olive trees, when a rustling near at hand attracted his attention ; he would have kept on his way, however, without stopping, had he not been brought to a stand by a body of men directly before him.

"Gentlemen," he said, not yet dreaming of evil, "I am in haste. Detain me not."

"You will answer us a question, will you not?" returned one of the intruders.

"Speak quickly."

"Give us time, fair sir. You are from the harbor?"

"Yes."

"You came on a ship from Crete?"

"Yes."

"And you landed this morning?"

"Yes."

"Your name is Theseus?"

Our hero did not answer this question as he had answered the others. He saw that the men before him were all armed, and it appeared to him that they were purposely blocking up his way. He ran his eye over the company, and concluded that there must be a score of them.

"Sirs, how is this?" he demanded. "Why do you stop me and question me thus?"

"Because," replied the foremost stranger, "we have business with thee."

"What business?"

"You are our prisoner!"

"By whose order?"

"The King's."

"That cannot be," said Theseus, promptly. "The King cannot know that I have come."

"But, nevertheless, he planned for the event of your coming, and we were directed to arrest you."

"Look ye, sirs; I am in no mood now for surrendering my liberty. Before this day is passed I will, of my own accord, present myself to King Ægeus; but I must not be detained at this time. I pray you, therefore, let me pass."

Instead of obeying this request the men gathered more closely about the youth, and some of those in the rear drew their swords. This latter movement opened Theseus' eyes. He saw very plainly that their intent was a hostile one, and his mind was not long wavering. If he allowed himself to be taken he could not return to Ariadne as he had promised, and he might not find Clio and Cassander.

"Sirs," he cried, taking a step back, "I have told you

that I would present myself before King Ægeus this very day; but I cannot go with you. Now let me pass."

"Your stubbornness hath sealed your own doom!" exclaimed the leader of the intruders; and as he spoke he unsheathed his sword.

"Now, by the bolts of Jove," shouted Theseus, "your intent is plain enough. If you wish to tempt me to combat, I will not be long in clearing my path."

The leader laughed scornfully, and with half a dozen men upon either hand, ready to support him, he advanced to the charge. Our hero had his father's sword in his hand, and with one sweep he severed the head of the leading foeman from its body. Upon this the others uttered loud shouts of vengeance, and pressed forward; but they found, to their cost, that they had no ordinary foe to deal with. Not only did the sharp sword of the hero fly like lightning through the air, but the movements of his body were so wonderful that no stroke could reach him. He kept his antagonists all before him, and when they began to fall back he pressed on after them. They fell like tall grain before the hook of the reaper, and finally, when there were about six of them left, the living ones turned and fled into the wood.

Theseus, as though he had but swept a mote from his path, sheathed his sword, and kept on his way, and when he reached Athens, the sun had not been two hours from its rest. He remembered the location of the dwelling where he had met the silversmith, and without difficulty he found it again. He knocked upon the gate, and very soon his summons was answered by a servant who led him in and conducted him to one of the upper chambers. In a little while the master of

the house appeared who, when he saw Theseus standing alive before him, was struck with astonishment.

"How—did you not go to Crete?"

"Yes, good Orestes; I went to Crete, and I performed the work I had planned. I slew the twelve lions, and led my companions out from the labyrinth."

"By my life, this is most wonderful. And did Minos set you all free?"

"Yes,—he kept his promise faithfully."

"When did you arrive in the harbor?"

"Not three hours ago."

"And have you come hither without attracting attention? Have you met no one?"

"I did meet a few men on the road—a score or so—who attempted to stop me. They even drew their swords upon me; but I quickly cut my way through."

"Do you mean that you overcame them?"

"Certainly. Why, my good Orestes, they were but as children in my hands. You see, I could not stop. I wished to find you, that I might learn something of Clio and Cassander; and you will pardon me if I am even now in haste. Do you know where my two faithful followers are?"

The old man seemed for a few moments to be beside himself with wonder and astonishment; and a close observer might have detected that he was somewhat nervous and disconcerted. Finally, however, the cloud passed from his brow, and he laid his hand upon the youth's arm.

"My son, your two friends are in my house. They have been here since you went away. I will call them. But—you have not broken your fast this morning."

Theseus shook his head.

"While I am finding your friends I will send a servant with refreshment."

"My brisk walk, and the exercise by the way, have sharpened my appetite some, I confess," said our hero, with a smile. "But I need not much. A little dried fruit will be sufficient."

"Then rest you here, and I will find Clio and Cassander forthwith."

The old man went away, and ere long afterwards a servant entered bearing a silver tray, upon which were a measure of dried dates and some bread. The dates were large, and of a delicate flavor—much richer than usual—and our hero ate heartily of them. When he had finished his meal he arose and went to the window, and when he had gazed awhile it seemed to him as though the men and women in the distant street were changing their shapes. Presently his vision became so disturbed that objects appeared floating in circles before him, and he was conscious of a dizzy sensation. He started back, and walked several times to and fro across the apartment; but he could not shake off the incubus. Finally he sat down, and pressed his hands upon his brow, and he was startled upon finding the moisture thereon cold and dripping. What could it mean? Was he in danger of a prostrating malady? No, no,—it must not be. Again he started up, and once more paced up and down the room; but very shortly his step grew uncertain, and he sank upon a stool near the door. A weight which he could not resist rested upon his lids, and thick darkness was gathering about him. With one convulsive effort he sprang from the seat, but only to sink helpless upon the floor. He murmured the name of Ariadne, and while the murmur still echoed upon the air his senses entirely left him.

When Theseus again opened his eyes with sense he found himself in a damp, dark place, with no ray of light to guide his vision; and the echo of his voice, as

he called for help, told him that he was surrounded by solid walls.

"Oh, heavens!" he cried, clasping his hands upon his bosom, "has this been a dream! Am I still in Minos' dungeon? No, no—it cannot be. The events have been too real. Oh, no—I feel the sweet kiss of Ariadne still upon my lips."

When he first tried to arise his limbs trembled beneath the weight of his body, but at length he stood upright, and was able to grope his way about. It was a dungeon, with walls of stone, uneven and damp, and with a floor that seemed to be of solid rock. The space was narrow, and the only article of furniture was a wooden pallet covered with mouldy straw. Again he sat down, and, as his thoughts came more freely, and his perception grew more keen and grasping, he pondered long and deeply upon the circumstances that, one after the other, came to his mind. Light began to dawn upon him; and as his comprehension awoke to the significance of the circumstances that had attended him thus far since his entrance into Attica, he wondered how he could have been so blind.

"I see it now," he soliloquized. "I have enemies in Athens—enemies who seek my destruction. I must have been recognized at Daphne. The warriors who met me between Daphne and Athens were sent to intercept me; and the horseman who escaped my club on that occasion brought intelligence to the city. The rascal who met us with the basket of fruit upon his arm was one of them. Ah—I remember now how he eyed me, and how he overdid his part. He was sent to lead me into a trap. And this old man who plays the character of Orestes—he is not Orestes at all. He was very ready to see me depart for Crete, for he felt sure that he would never see me again. But I have come back,

and he must now be rid of me by other means. He gives me food containing a powerful somnific preparation, and thus overcomes my strength that I may be conveyed to this deep dungeon. And what next? Must I starve here, or will they come to slay me? Oh, if they would only come I should be content.

"Ariadne, where art thou? Oh, and must my will be stayed by these walls! Cannot the gods give me help in this hour of need?"

He sank down upon the mouldering straw; and as he closed his eyes in thought of Ariadne he once more fell asleep, for the power of the opiate was not yet dissipated.

When he next awoke, and had entirely recovered his senses, he felt something of his old strength in his limbs. And his dungeon was not so dark as before. There was a faint glimmer of light reflected from the wet points of the rock, and upon looking upward he discovered a small opening, in one corner of the roof, not larger than a man's hand. After a little time he was able to distinguish the angles and surfaces of the walls quite plainly; and he also saw the door, which he found to be made of iron. He went to it, and pressed against it with his hands, but it gave no signs of yielding.

"I shall not die here," he said to himself. "If they come to slay me, I will crush them; and if they think of starving me here, I will find some means of breaking down that door. Oh, if I had the club of Periphetes now!"

As he spoke his eye chanced to rest upon the frame of the low pallet. He went to it, and found two of the pieces to be stout and strong. With a quick movement he scattered the straw over the floor, and then tore the frame asunder. The side pieces were of oak, and very heavy, and having secured one of these he turned once more to the door, and sought to find its weakest

part. At length he gathered his energies for the trial, and at the first blow the very rocks seemed to shake. Again and again he hurled his club against the barrier, and finally the stout iron began to give. When he saw this he gave new power to the onset, and ere long the heavy door went down, and our hero sprang forth into the passage beyond. He was deliberating upon which direction he should take, when a glare of light broke in upon the far darkness, and the sound of human voices was borne to his ear.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE COBBLER.

The sun rose higher and higher above the Hymettic hills, and the day was advancing, while the inmates of the Athenian ship waited anxiously for the return of their heroic deliverer. Ariadne became alarmed, for she felt sure that her lover would not, of his own accord, remain away so long. She sought Glaucis, and asked him to go in search of Theseus ; but he shook his head. He said he had promised the hero that he would not leave the ship until he returned.

"But," urged the princess, "how long will you wait? Theseus should have returned ere this. Oh, I fear some evil has befallen him."

Glaucis was not himself entirely at ease concerning his leader ; but he wished to hide his thoughts from Ariadne.

"We will not tarry beyond noon," he said. "When the shadows of our masts point to the north, if he has not then come, we will go."

Ariadne returned to the cabin, where the Athenian maidens sought to comfort her. Andromeda had learned to love the gentle princess of Crete as a sister, and she whispered all the words of hope she could command.

By and by there was a commotion on deck, and Ariadne, thinking that Theseus might have returned, hastened up, Thalia and Andromeda following close behind her.

"It is not our chieftain," said Glaucis, as he met the inquiring glance of the princess. "Our attention was attracted by yonder ships which are entering the harbor."

The maidens looked in the direction pointed out, and a quick cry broke from Thalia's lips :

"They are Cretan ships ; and in advance comes the barge of the king !"

"It is my father's ship !" exclaimed Ariadne, turning pale. But in a moment more the blood returned to her face, and with a quick movement she caught Glaucis by the arm.

"We must stay here no longer, good Glaucis. My father must not find me. Oh, if I am overtaken now, misery is mine. Listen to me, I pray you. Let us hasten away as swiftly as possible. Where is Andromeda ?"

"I am here, my sister."

"You will go with me, Andromeda ? You will lead me to a place of safety ?"

"I will serve you with my life," replied the Athenian maiden. "If Glaucis will lead us to the city, I can easily find for you a resting-place secure from intrusion."

Among these youths and maidens of Athens there was not one who would not have given up even life

itself for the benefit of their heroic deliverer; and since they knew that their hero not only loved Ariadne, but that she had furnished him with the means of their deliverance, they were equally ready to serve her. In the absence of Theseus, Glaucis assumed control of affairs, and he at once ordered the boats to be manned, and with as little delay as possible they put off for the shore, where horses were easily obtained, and ere long the party were on their way to Athens, which place they reached without further interruption than the questioning of those whom they met. As they entered the city they were quickly surrounded by an eager, curious multitude, and while they were trying to break through this friendly barrier a messenger arrived from the royal palace.

Ægeus, King of Athens, was an old man, and tottering. He had once been bold and strong, but excessive labor, and much disappointment, had brought on disease; and, at the age of four-score, he was weak and palsied. He was by nature a just and upright man, but of late years he had grown jealous and fearful, and, surrounded, as he was, by designing, plotting, unscrupulous courtiers, his moods were apt to be, at times, of a dangerous kind. And there was another power at work for evil over the mind of Ægeus. He had, in his old age, married Media, the sorceress. This woman, beautiful and corrupt, had been separated from Jason, and had been forced to flee from Corinth. She stopped at Athens, where, by her arts, she captivated the old king, and persuaded him to make her his wife.

On the morning in question Ægeus received early intelligence of the arrival of the ship from Crete, and in a few hours afterwards he was informed that the fourteen youths and maidens had come back. At first he was unwilling to believe this; but the assurance was

made more strong, and when he could no longer doubt, he directed that the returned ones should be sent to him as soon as possible.

The king's messenger arrived, as we have seen, and delivered his errand, whereupon Glaucis turned to his companions and informed them that he would lead the way to the royal palace. Ariadne hastened forward, and was upon the point of speaking with Glaucis, when Andromeda drew her back.

"What would you do, lady?"

"I must not go to the palace," replied the princess, in alarm. "My father will make his first inquiry of Ægeus, and if I am there, I am lost."

"But," said Andromeda, "you cannot go away alone."

"Glaucis will allow you to go with me?"

"Of course he would; but do you not see the danger of such a movement? The king will miss me, and he will ask where I am. Glaucis cannot tell a lie, so he will be forced to reply that he suffered me to depart from him. Then the king must know why I went, which would bring you into the question. But, dear lady, if we slip away unobserved, Glaucis will have no explanations to make. He must simply say that Andromeda is gone, but how, when or where, he knows not."

Ariadne at once saw the force of her friend's reasoning, and allowed herself to be led back to the rear of the procession where she and Thalia remained together. By and by they reached a point where a narrow way, with an arched entrance opened to the left, and here Andromeda touched the princess upon the arm.

"Follow me quickly and quietly," she said. "Keep your mantle over your face, and stop to answer no questions."

The crowd was so dense about the procession, and so much noise was being made, that the slipping away

of the three females was not noticed. When they had once gained the narrow street Andromeda hastened on until she was sure that she had got beyond the notice of the crowd, and then she allowed Ariadne to come up by her side.

"I might take you to my own house," she said; "but I hardly think that would be safe. It may be that the king will send for me, and if he does his messenger must not find you with me. In a quiet part of the city there lives an old cobbler, who, from the good my father hath done him in times past, owes us much gratitude. He is an honest, kind-hearted man, and I know he will serve us. His wife is as good as he, and will be to you a friend. I think we will seek his abode."

"I will go to the old cobbler's," returned Ariadne; "but you must not remain with me. You must go forth and find Theseus; for what is safety to me if he be in danger."

"Trust me, my sister, to do all I can. As soon as I have seen you in a place of safety I will seek my companions. If you think that you alone are interested in the welfare of the hero, you are mistaken. Let me assure you that Glaucis and the other youths of Athens, who have been saved from the lions and labyrinth of Minos, will not rest until they have found their preserver."

Thus conversing Andromeda led the way to that part of the city which lay at the foot of the hill of Mars, and at length she stopped before an open stall, where a cobbler was busy upon his bench. He was an old man, of small frame, with a sparkling grey eye, and with full, flushed lips, about which lurked signs of extreme good nature.

"Good Andros," spoke Andromeda, "I have come to thee for help."

"Ha! by the gods, I see a ghost!" cried the cobbler, dropping the sandal upon which he was at work, and clapping his hands together.

"No, no, Andros; I am no ghost."

"But thou art not Andromeda."

"I am."

"Now may the griffins fly away with me if thou art not telling me falsehood. Did I not behold the gentle Andromeda embark on board the fatal ship for Crete. Away, vile sorceress. Tempt me not."

"Good Andros," said the Greek maiden, smiling, in spite of her anxiety, at the quaintness of the old man's manner, didst ever hear of two giants that once inhabited the Corinthian isthmus?"

"Aye, that I have, fair sorceress. They were Procrustes, the Stretcher—so called because he stretched his victims on an iron bedstead; and Periphetes, of the iron club. But you cannot frighten me in that way, vile enchantress; for both the monsters are dead."

"Who slew them?"

"Ah, there's the mystery, false woman. They were slain by a valiant hero whom nobody knows."

"There you are mistaken, old Andros. The valiant hero is known, thou thick-headed cobbler."

"Who knows him, abominable wretch?"

"I know him, thou miserable, hen-pecked, ill-shapen vagabond."

"Ha! by the terrible thunders of immortal Jove, if thou callest me hen-pecked again, I'll—I'll—belabor thee with my leathern strap. Get thee gone, thou lying, misleading, grace-forsaken woman."

"Tut, tut, good Andros; listen to me. I am Andromeda, and I will tell thee how I came here; but first lead us away from the street."

"By my life," said the cobbler, looking sharply up

into the maiden's face, "when you spit out those foul names upon me you did in truth remind me of Andromeda; but not a foot do you put inside of my dwelling until you have told me, if you be Andromeda, how you came here."

The maiden knew the old man well enough to know that he would have his own way.

"Did you not hear," she replied, "that a young man named Theseus, volunteered to be one of the seven youths for the tribute to the King of Crete?"

"Yes, fair enchantress, I heard of that."

"Know, then, good Andros, that the young man was none other than the hero who slew the two monsters of the Corinthian isthmus. He went with us to Crete—went into the labyrinth—he slew all the lions with his own hand—and then led us forth in safety from the wonderful place. Now, Andros, in the name of the love thou didst once bear my father, I pray thee give us entrance to thy house."

"Why, thou blessed, beauteous, lovely child!" cried the cobbler, starting forward and extending his soiled hands. "I know thee now for Andromeda. But who are these?"

"They are two friends for whom I would bespeak your kindness. If you serve them you will never regret it."

"Well, come in—come in; and we'll see what can be done."

Thus speaking, Andros led the way through his stall to a small gate which opened into a circular court. This court formed the centre of his dwelling, the different apartments opening from it as rooms open from a winding corridor. The apartment to which he conducted his guests was the largest and most airy one he possessed, and here he found his wife sitting. The wife

was larger than the husband ; but the habitual smile of good-nature upon her round face clearly indicated that the smaller spouse had no occasion to fear her.

"Zoe, Zoe," cried the cobbler, as he entered the room, "a miracle ! A miracle ! See !"

Zoe recognized Andromeda, and hastened to embrace her. She could not mistake that face ; and, unlike her husband, she gave the benefit of truth to her own senses, resolved to seek an explanation afterward. And that explanation she soon received, for as soon as they had all become seated Andromeda told the whole story, from beginning to end, save such parts as related to the princess. When she had concluded both Andros and Zoe were filled with wonder and astonishment. They could not find words to express their admiration of the hero who had performed such prodigious deeds of valor and prowess.

"When shall we see him ?" asked Andros.

"Aye—when shall we see him ?" echoed Zoe.

"Ah," answered Andromeda, shaking her head, "there is the trouble. Our deliverer left us this morning, and we have not seen him since. He promised us that he would speedily return ; but he did not, and we fear that some evil hath befallen him. This lady was under his protection, and it is to find a safe retreat for her, until Theseus can be found, that I have come hither."

Upon this the cobbler and his wife turned their attention upon Ariadne, and it was quickly evident that they were favorably impressed. They not only saw that she was exceedingly beautiful, but they fancied that she was mild and gentle.

"By the girdle of Venus," cried Andros, who had something of an eye for beauty, "there should be no more worrying about the boasted loveliness of the princess of Crete."

"Ah—do you know her?" quickly demanded Andromeda.

"Who—the princess of Crete? No—not I; but I've heard of her. Have not half the kings of Hellas tried in vain to win her?"

Andromeda whispered with the princess, and it was quickly arranged between them that the whole truth should be told; for Ariadne had assured herself that both the old man and his wife were to be trusted.

"Good Andros," said Andromeda, "I shall begin to think you are the necromancer. Listen to me, and I will tell you a part of our story which I have thus far omitted: Theseus could not have slain the lions without help; nor could he have led us out from that dread labyrinth without a guide. While he was in the dungeon beneath the palace of Minos, the princess Ariadne visited him and gave him a sword with which to slay the lions, and a clue of silk with which to mark his course in the labyrinth. The princess loved him, and he loved the princess; but a cruel mandate of her father threatened to make her miserable forever. King Minos was about to bestow her hand upon Serapis, King of Egypt, who was almost as old as her father, besides being ugly and dark. In this extremity she fled from her father's palace, and came to Athens with Theseus. This forenoon her father's ships entered the harbor Piræus, and the princess knew that they had come for her. What could she do? Theseus was away, and she knew no one in Athens. She appealed to me, and I promised to serve her. But whither should I take her? I could not take her to my own home, because search might be made there; so I brought her hither. Good Andros—good Zoe—I know you will befriend her."

At the conclusion of this speech the host and his

wife were about as much astonished as before; but Zoe was not without sense. She arose and approached the princess, and would have sunk upon her knees had not the maiden prevented her.

"Stop, good mother," cried Ariadne, taking Zoe's hand. "You must not regard me as a princess. Let me be to you as a daughter. Give me your love and your care, and let me and my faithful Thalia remain here in quiet safety. Let us remain here until they shall find Theseus, and then he will come for me."

"My dear child," returned Zoe, full of sympathy and kindness, "you shall remain here as long as you wish; and we will do all we can to serve and to save you."

"Aye," exclaimed Andros, smiting his begrimmed hands together; "she shall stay here as long as she pleases; and if that ugly king of Egypt dares to show his face in my court, I'll—I'll—strangle him!"

Andromeda had not been mistaken in her calculations touching the kindness of the cobbler and his wife, and when she had thus seen Ariadne provided for she arose to depart.

"Be assured," she said, as she held the princess by the hand, "that you shall receive intelligence as soon as we learn anything of Theseus. Do not faint, my sister. Oh, the gods will not suffer evil to triumph over so noble a youth. And remember, too, that when our story is made public he will have friends everywhere."

When the Athenian maiden had gone Ariadne returned to the side of Zoe, and tried to fix in her mind a foundation for hope.

CHAPTER XIV.

THREE KINGS IN COUNCIL.

Media, the sorceress, and wife of the king, when she knew that the Athenian youths and maidens had returned in safety from Crete and were on their way to the royal palace, joined her husband in the great council chamber and sat by his side on the throne. She did not seem so happy in view of the return of the redeemed ones as did others. She was restless and nervous as could be seen by the compression of her thin lips and the twitching of her fingers ; and when the arrival of the procession was announced she turned pale ; but it was only for a moment. As the youths and maidens were led into the chamber she scanned them carefully, and when she saw that there were but six of the former she breathed more freely. She did not notice then the absence of one of the maidens.

The procession had been a long time in reaching the palace, for the populace had so blocked up the streets that it moved on its way with difficulty ; and even the royal residence was not closed against the joyous throng. It was known that the living tribute had returned and that the terrible burden had been removed forevermore; but it was not known how all this had been bought about, and this knowledge the people were anxious to

obtain ; so they filled the court of the palace, and many of them made their way to the council-chamber.

"How is this?" demanded Ægeus, when he had counted the number of those who stood before him. "I see but twelve of you where there should be fourteen. I thought you had all returned."

"Sire," replied Glaucis, "of the youths our deliverer is missing, and of the maidens I see that Andromeda is gone. It may be that the latter got pushed back by the crowd ; but of the other I must tell you anon."

"Enough of that," cried the King, impatiently. "Tell us the story of your deliverance."

"Sire, you were aware that a stranger youth went out with us of his own accord, in hopes that he might free Athens from the fatal burden of this tribute."

"Yes,—I know all that."

"Then, sire, if you will lend your ear I will relate to you the circumstances just as they transpired."

And from this point Glaucis went on with the narrative, giving a true and faithful account of all that had befallen them since they left Athens. He told how Theseus had managed to secrete a short stout sword under his garments, and how he had provided himself with a clue of silken thread to mark the route by which they were led into the labyrinth ; but of the princess Ariadne he spoke not a word.

While Glaucis was describing how the hero slew the ferocious lions, the maiden Andromeda entered the council-chamber, and took her place with her companions. The king saw her, but so interested was he in the story that he would not interrupt it. The narrator cast a quick glance upon the returned maiden, and when he saw the light dance in her bright eyes he knew that the princess was safe, for the present, at least.

Glaucis went on, painting the slaying of the lions in

most vivid language, and when he had finally told of the leading of the devoted band forth from the labyrinth, and of their gathering together and kneeling beneath the stars to offer up their thanks to the gods, the people could restrain their enthusiasm no longer. Shouts of joy awoke the air, and shook the very walls of the palace.

But where was the heroic deliverer ?

At this question every tongue was silent, and all hung once more upon the words of Glaucis.

" Sire," resumed the youth, " our deliverer came with us to the Piræus, and was with us when we cast our anchor. When he went away he left two dear friends in this city whom he was very anxious to see, and as soon as our sails were furled he set off alone, promising to be back in three hours ; but he did not return, and we know not where he is."

At this point there was heard the sound of disturbance without, and presently afterwards a messenger came hurrying into the royal presence, who spoke as follows :

" Sire, Minos, King of Crete, and Serapis, King of Egypt, with many of their chief men, are in the court, and they demand audience of your majesty."

Ægeus turned pale, for the intelligence shocked him. What could these two powerful monarchs want in Athens ? But he could not stop long to consider. He ordered the crowd to stand back, and then directed his chief officers to go and conduct the royal visitors to the council-chamber. In a little while Minos and Serapis arrived at the principal entrance, where Ægeus met them with uncovered head. Seats of ivory, inlaid with gold, were placed upon the right hand of the throne where they were requested to sit.

Ægeus was more deeply concerned than he would have cared to have known by those who stood around ; but

Media whispered to him that he was forgetting himself and under her directions he acted.

"My brother of Crete," he said, "this visit, so unexpected, has taken me entirely by surprise; but nevertheless, I bid you welcome to Athens."

Minos bowed his head in token of his acceptance of the welcome, and then arose to his feet.

"Ægeus, I have come hither after my daughter."

"Thy daughter!" repeated the Athenian King in surprise.

"Yes—the princess Ariadne. But I will explain." Minos cast his eyes over the youths and maidens who stood together not far away, and then continued:

"I think I see before me some of those youths and damsels who were sent unto me for tribute."

"Yes," replied Ægeus, "you see them there."

"But I do not see them all. I do not see the man who wrought the deliverance. Where is he?"

Ægeus called upon Glaucis, who stepped forward and related over again the circumstances attending the departure of Theseus from the ship.

"And did he go alone?" demanded Minos.

"Entirely so, sire."

"Was there no female went with him?"

"No, sire."

"Then where is the princess Ariadne?"

"Indeed, sire, I cannot tell thee."

"My brother," interrupted Ægeus, "your words puzzle me. I pray you explain to me this matter concerning your daughter."

"Thus, then, it is," answered Minos, speaking hurriedly, and with some passion: "The youth Theseus, who wrought the wonderful deliverance of himself and companions, was of fair aspect and exceeding comeliness. My daughter saw him, and was enamored, and during

the night on which your ship sailed she fled from my palace ; and I know that she sailed with your people. She was affianced to our brother, the King of Egypt, and was to have been shortly married. I have now come to demand my daughter, and also to demand the man who stole her away. Give them to me, and all may be well."

Ægeus trembled again, but a few words from his wife gave proper directions to his thoughts.

"Glaucis," he said, "what explanation can you give of this matter? Did Ariadne sail with you from Crete?"

"Sire," returned the youth promptly, "I will tell you all that I know. While we lay at anchor in the harbor of the Cretan capital two maidens came off and joined us. One was Ariadne, and the other was her attendant. Theseus took them under his own care, and as he was our master we did not question him."

"Did they land with you?"

"They did, Sire."

"Where are they now?"

"In truth I cannot tell. I know that they came to the city with us ; but in the crowd they slipped away without my knowledge, and I did not miss them until we arrived at your palace."

At this point Media again whispered to the King. He nodded to his wife, and then turning to Glaucis, he resumed :

"Did Ariadne remain with Theseus during your passage?"

"No, sire ; she was with our maidens."

"Ah—then perhaps our fair Andromeda can enlighten us. Let her step forth."

The damsel thus designated took her place by the side of Glaucis. She trembled a little when her name

had first been announced, but she was calm and collected when she stood before the King.

"Andromeda, answer me truly: where is the princess Ariadne?"

"Indeed, sire, I cannot tell."

"Beware! Did you not leave the procession while on your way hither?"

"Yes, sire; and it is a wonder to me that all the rest did not do the same. I got separated from my companions, but rejoined them as soon as I could."

"Stop," interrupted Minos, arising from his seat. "I think the truth is plain. Theseus left the ship at early dawn, and came to the city. He did not intend to return. He had planned with my daughter that she should meet him here. To his arms she must have flown. Find Theseus and you will find Ariadne."

"Aye," cried Ægeus, "that must be the truth. Andromeda, where is Theseus?"

"Sire," replied the maiden, so solemnly that none could doubt her, "I call on all the gods to witness that I know nothing of the whereabouts of our heroic deliverer. I have not seen him since he left the ship at early dawn, nor have I received any intelligence of him."

Ægeus shook his head dubiously.

"Of one thing we are assured," said Serapis, speaking for the first time: "The princess came to Athens with these youths and maidens, and she must now be somewhere within the realm. She is mine, by right of gift and affiance, and I demand that she be restored to me."

"And I," added Minos, "demand the person of the abductor. When I relinquished the tribute I did it because of the prowess of Theseus; and if this same Theseus yield not his life to me, then is my promise void, and Athens shall yet pay the yearly tribute."

Ægeus paled, and shook as though with the palsy;

but Media again came to his aid, and after she had whispered a few words into his ear, he said :

" My beloved brother, I know you have just cause of complaint, but you shall not complain because of my unwillingness to render to you what is your due. The body of Theseus you shall have, if I am forced to search to the ends of the earth. Will that satisfy you ?"

" I would prefer to have him alive," replied Minos ; " but if that cannot be I will take him dead. Render up my daughter, and give to me the body of her abductor, and there shall be peace between us !"

" It shall be done."

" It must be done."

" The gods grant that your daughter may be returned to you in safety."

" And may the gods grant," added Minos, solemnly, " that this fair realm be not ravaged and laid waste."

Once more Media whispered with Ægeus, and when she had done, the old king turned to the Cretan monarch, and said :

" I swear to you, by a solemn oath, that the youth Theseus shall be given up to you as soon as he is found; and I furthermore swear that the princess Ariadne shall be searched for at once. And now, my royal brothers, if you will follow my chamberlain, he will lead you to an apartment where a repast is already served for you."

Both the visiting kings were hungry, and they were not long in moving after the chamberlain—they and their followers.

" Media," cried the king, as soon as Minos and his companions had left the council chamber, " this is a terrible thing. If we find not the princess and her abductor, we may be sure that not only Athens, but all Africa, will be ravaged and laid waste. We could not stand be-

fore the hosts of Crete, and what shall we do against both Crete and Egypt?"

"Fear not," replied Media, with masculine energy. "The princess can surely be found; and I doubt not that Theseus will be given to us. Let these youths and maidens find the lady Ariadne. Let it be their duty so to do. Their lives have once been forfeit. Let them live on condition that they bring the princess of Crete to your palace, safe and sound."

"By the crown of Jove!" cried Ægeus, starting up, and turning toward the returned victims, "so it shall be. Glaucis to you I give charge of this matter. You may direct your male companions, and Andromeda may direct the damsels. Bring to me the princess of Crete, alive and unharmed, and you may live; but if you fail, your lives shall pay the forfeit. Go, now, and make all possible haste, for the penalty shall not be long delayed. I give you until the setting of to-morrow's sun."

Glaucis knew that the king meant just what he said, and he left the council-chamber with a heavy heart. His companions followed him with downcast looks, and when they reached the court they stopped to deliberate.

"Let us go to some quiet place," said Andromeda, "where we can talk without being overheard."

"My dwelling is nearest at hand," replied Glaucis. "Let us go thither."

So to the dwelling of Glaucis they went, where his aged mother wept with joy upon the bosom of her returned son. When the first transports were passed, and the mother had fairly assured herself that her beloved child was safe, Glaucis sent her away to prepare refreshment for his friends.

"Now," he said, as the door was closed behind his

mother, "what shall we do?" and as he spoke he looked inquiringly upon Andromeda.

"We must find Theseus," that maiden replied.

"But why find him?" asked the youth, Serpho.

"Aye," echoed Pyrgos, another of the youths, "why find Theseus? It is the finding of the princess that alone can save our lives."

"I know," replied Andromeda. "But could we find Theseus, he might help us out of the difficulty."

"Aye," added Glaucis, "if we could find him he might do wonders."

"But," suggested Serpho, "while we search for him we are neglecting the princess."

"My brothers," spoke Andromeda, after a short pause, "you must go forth this very hour and commence the search for our noble deliverer. We owe him our very lives, and we must not forget him. There are yet some hours left of this day. Search while the day lasts, and if necessary search through the night. Call upon your friends whom you can trust, and let them help you. Labor diligently until to-morrow's sun is near its setting, and if then Theseus be not found I will conduct you to the resting-place of the princess."

"How?" cried Pyrgos. "Do you know where she is?"

"Yes. I led her away from the crowd myself, and conducted her to a place of safety. Theseus is not with her, and she knows not where he is."

"It will be very cruel to deliver the princess up," said one of the sympathizing maidens.

"If we find Theseus," replied Andromeda, "we may not have to do it. But we must work."

At this juncture the mother of Glaucis returned, and when the party had partaken of such refreshment as she had prepared, they took counsel further together and then separated.

Andromeda hastened away to her home, where she assumed the garb of a peasant girl, and having browned her face and hands she set forth in quest of information. She met several of her companions on the way, but they did not recognize her. She went first to the gate by which she knew Theseus had entered, and after much inquiry she found a boy who had seen a man, answering the description she gave of the hero, enter the city early in the morning, and he pointed out to her the street into which the man had turned. With this information she went on to the street designated, where she instituted new inquiries ; and at length she had the good fortune to find a pastry cook who had seen the youth of whom she was in search.

" I noticed him," said the cook, " because he stopped over against my stall as though he was not quite sure of his way ; and I noticed the curious sword he wore, with a hilt of twisted gold and silver, and an enormous carbuncle on the pommel."

" That was my brother, good sir. Which way did he go ?"

With the information she derived from the pastry cook Andromeda was led to another street ; and as the last rays of the setting sun faded from the walls of the Acropolis she had reached the house which she believed Theseus had entered. Then she hastened away, and after much searching she found Glaucis and Serpho.

" Good Glaucis," she said, I am sure I have found the house which Theseus entered this morning. Thus much have I done, and you must do the rest. Do you know where Polydius lives ?"

" Certainly."

" Into his dwelling I am confident our hero went."

" Do you mean the brother of the king ?"

" Yes."

"But what could Theseus have had to do with him?"

"That I cannot tell. It is for you to ascertain."

"By the rock of Delphi," cried Glaucis, clapping his hands, "I begin to suspect that evil hath befallen our deliverer. This Polydius is a scheming man, and he fears every one who promises to outshine his ambitious sons. But why should Theseus have gone to him? I am puzzled."

"You will watch that house, Glaucis?"

"Yes."

"Then find your companions, and be at the work; and while you are laboring for Theseus, I will go and see how fares it with Ariadne."

CHAPTER XV.

FROM TROUBLE TO TROUBLE.

We left Theseus just emerged from the dungeon, he having battered down the iron door with one of the oaken beams of his bedstead. The beam had been somewhat splintered by its hard usage, but it would still serve as a very formidable weapon in the hands of one who could wield it. The light which glared in upon the noisome place grew more bright, and the voices became more distinct. Close at hand our hero saw a small recess, which appeared to have been made for the reception of rubbish, and into this he glided, determined to discover whether the newcomers were friends or foes before he revealed himself. Presently he beheld six men, all armed with gleaming swords, and two of them carrying torches. They were stout,

hard-featured fellows, and wore the garb of Athenian soldiers.

Hark! They still converse freely, and are now so near that the youth hears them plainly.

"It's to be a quick job, and a sure one," said one of the torch-bearers.

"Aye, and it will be an easy one," returned another. "By the sword of Mars, I think our master must rate this rascal very high if he thinks that six of us are necessary to so simple a work. He says the prisoner is unarmed."

"He is wholly stripped of his steel," said a third, "for I helped to bring him down here. I'd give a didrachm to know who he is."

"Ye gods!" cried the first speaker, "suppose it should be the man about whom so much noise is being made."

"What man mean you?"

"I mean the Attic hero, Theseus."

"Bah! What think ye our master could want of his life. No, no—it must be some unfortunate fellow who has crossed Polydius' track. I pity him; but I cannot help him. The most I can do for him is to pray that the dark boatman will take him safely over the river, and land him carefully upon the shores of the blessed isles."

"Hush!" spoke the leading torch-bearer, lowering his voice. "Here we are, close by the door of his dungeon. Be ready, you who have no torches, and spring in as soon as the way is opened. Do not let the poor fellow suffer. Put an end to him as quickly as possible. Perhaps he is still asleep. If he is, he will never wake again on this side of the shades. Ha! What is this! Ye gods! the door has been torn down!"

"Mercy, O heaven!" ejaculated another, when he

saw the iron door battered from its hinges. "Some god hath done this. What, save the hammer of Vulcan, could have so crushed this ponderous iron?"

Theseus had heard enough; for he fancied that he had discovered that these fellows were not upon a mission particularly friendly. He gave them credit for their prayers in his behalf, and in return for that much of good he felt willing to pray the same for them.

"Is he in the dungeon?" asked one of the ruffians who stood in the rear.

"No," replied the leader.

"Then where can he have gone to? We found the upper door securely locked?"

"He is here!" pronounced our hero, stepping forth into the light.

The soldiers started back as from a ghost; but presently they recovered themselves; and when they saw that the prisoner had no arms, they grew courageous. They saw that he leaned upon something which looked like a beam of wood; but they did not fear that. At length the leader spoke:

"We are very glad to find that you have not gone far away. Perhaps you have heard some of our conversation?"

"Yes,—I have."

"And perhaps you have learned what our errand is?"

"My ears are good, fair sirs, and I understand your business perfectly. And now listen to me: I give you your choice. You may turn about and lead me in safety to the open street, or you may attack me with your swords. If you lead me forth from this place, I will thank you, and reward you when I have opportunity. If you attack me, I shall kill you."

The soldiers laughed heartily at what they considered a piece of impudent pleasantry.

"Will you kill us all at once, or will you drop us one at a time?" asked the leader derisively.

"Make your choice quickly," cried Theseus; "for I have no disposition to wait here. If you would know how I can dispose of you the means of that knowledge are within your reach. Turn towards the upper world, or strike, as you please."

"You have heard us speak our purpose, and we have not spoken falsely. We will pray for the rest of your spirit after you are dead."

Thus speaking the leader of the assassins raised his sword, and motioned for his companions to advance. Theseus took a few steps back, so as to reach a place where he could have a free sweep for his club, and then he spoke his last word of warning:

"Hold, sirs! If you do this at the command of another, know that you are contemplating a grievous sin against an innocent man. Turn from me and you may live. If you attack me you die. I have no more to say."

Three of the soldiers laughed at this; but the other three seemed to feel that the man before them might be able to accomplish what he had threatened. The presence of that battered iron door was a marvel to them. However, they had no choice. Their leader ordered them on, and they dared not disobey.

"Die with thy vaunting upon thy lips!" pronounced the foremost ruffian.

His sword was aimed for a thrust; but in a moment more he was stretched lifeless upon the pavement. That ponderous beam of oak, so heavy and so solid, seemed but as a whip of straw in the grasp of the hero. Like a flash of light it swept through the air, and three of the soldiers went down beneath its fatal blows before they could fairly see what manner of weapon was used

against them. Two more quickly followed, stricken dead ere they could bring their swords into play; and thus, of the murderous crew, only one was left, and he the rear torch-bearer. This man was one of those who had seen nothing to laugh at in the threat of the prisoner, and when he beheld his companions stretched lifeless before him, he sank down upon his knees and begged for mercy.

"Take your torch! take your torch!" cried Theseus, seeing that the fellow had dropped his light in his terror.

The soldier picked up the torch before it had become extinguished, and again begged that his life might be spared.

"Look ye, sir," returned our hero, resting the end of his club upon the pavement, "I am that Theseus of whom I heard one of your companions speak. It was I who slew the monsters Procrustes and Periphetes, and it was I who slew the twelve lions in the labyrinth of Crete. What is your name?"

"My name is Hermos," replied the man, trembling at every joint.

"Shall I add your body to the bloody pile?"

"Oh, good Theseus, spare me! I came not hither of my own accord. My master sent me, and I could not refuse."

"On one condition, Master Hermos, I will give you your life. Answer me such questions as I shall ask, and respond to such demands as I may make, and your life shall be spared."

"I will answer truly; I will do anything you wish."

"Then get up, and give me your sword. Fear not; for if I meant thee harm, I should strike thee where thou kneelest."

The man arose to his feet, and handed his sword to Theseus.

"Now, Hermos, calm yourself, and prepare to answer me. In the first place, what's the hour?"

"It is the second hour of the first watch, sir."

"Then the night has but just set in?"

"It has not been dark more than an hour."

"Very well. Now for the second question, Where am I?"

"You are in the vault beneath the house of Polydius."

"And who is Polydius?"

"There is but one Polydius in Athens, sir, and he is the brother of the king."

"Was it in this house that I ate the food containing the powder that deprived me of sense?"

"Yes."

"Was it Polydius who gave me the food?"

"Yes."

"Do you know Orestes, the silversmith?"

"Yes."

"Does he live near here?"

"No, sir. His dwelling is in another part of the city."

"Now, sir, answer me this: Why has Polydius thus sought my life?"

"He informed us that it was by order of the king," replied the soldier, who had become quite calm and composed under the influence of the hero's gentle manner. "This morning two kings arrived in Athens—Minos, of Crete, and Serapis, of Egypt. Minos sought his daughter, whom he said Theseus had taken away; and he also demanded the life of the abductor, which Ægeus readily promised."

"Ah!—and is the princess Ariadne with her father?" asked our hero, excitedly.

"I think not, sir. She had not been found when the sun went down."

Theseus breathed more freely.

"Where are the youths and maidens who returned with me from Crete?"

"They are searching for the princess. They are to deliver her up before the setting of to-morrow's sun, or suffer death."

A quick shudder passed through the youth's frame and for a moment he tightened his hold upon the club.

"Hermos," he said, after a short pause, "when Polydius told you that he sought my life because of the order of the king, he told you that which was false. Can you not think of some other cause for his deadly intent?"

The soldier shook his head.

"Never mind," pursued Theseus. "I shall find out in good time. And now, sir, I must ask after two friends whom I left here before I went to Crete. They were Clio and Cassander. Can you tell me where they are?"

The man hesitated.

"Will you answer me?"

"Yes, sir. The men of whom you speak are not far from where we now stand. If you will follow me I will lead you to their dungeon."

"Have they been here ever since I went to Crete?"

"Yes."

"Why were they thus seized?"

"I cannot tell, sir, unless it was that you might be the more readily secured."

"I think you have hit the truth. But come—lead me to them."

Hermos turned, bearing his torch before him, and having traversed several winding passages he stopped before an iron door like that which Theseus had demolshed. The bolts were withdrawn, and when the door was opened our hero beheld two men, covered with

filth, who held their hands over their eyes to shut out the sudden glare of light.

"Oh, in mercy's name," cried one of them, "either set us free from this place, or put an end to our lives!"

Theseus at first wondered why they did not start up and attack those who had opened the door; but he presently saw that they were chained to the floor.

"Clio!—Cassander!—Oh, my poor brothers, how have you suffered!"

The two prisoners started to their feet, and when they beheld their beloved master they wept with joy. He pressed them in turn to his bosom, and then broke the shackles from their legs.

"Are you strong enough to walk?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Clio. "The sight of our master, safe and sound, gives us strength. We have suffered much in body; but we have suffered more in anxiety for thee."

"Ah, my brothers, had I known where you were, I should not have left you thus to suffer; but the villain who brought this burden upon you also laid a grievous burden upon me."

"Was it Orestes who wronged us?"

"No, no. We were cruelly deceived. We have not yet seen Orestes. But let us not remain here to talk. When we reach the outer world we will tell as many stories as we please. Come, Hermos, lead on, and let us get quickly out from this dismal place."

The soldier moved on with his torch, and, as the others followed, Theseus could not restrain a question touching his mother, but his friends could give him no information.

"We entirely fainted away within half an hour after you left us, my master, and when we came to our senses we found ourselves in the dungeon from which you

have just released us. There must have been some mighty sleeping-powder in the wine we drank."

"Yes," said Theseus, "I know something of the manner of the hoary wretch who rules this place. But we may live to requite him."

"The gods grant it," ejaculated Clio and Cassandra in concert.

The soldier led the way without faltering, until he reached the court, which the three friends at once recognized as the place they had before visited. The stars were gleaming overhead, and from the position of the constellations Theseus knew that it was early in the evening. Here the guide stopped, and asked which way they would go.

"I would first see Polydius," replied Theseus.

"You cannot see him now," said Hermos, "for he is at the royal palace."

"Then lead the way into his dwelling. I must find my sword and buckler; and we must also obtain some fitting garments for my two men."

Hermos dared not refuse, so he did as directed. Theseus found his sword and shield, and he found clean garments for Clio and Cassander; and thus prepared he went forth again into the court, where he left the guide to explain matters to his master as he saw fit. If Theseus had been calculatingly wise, he would have locked Hermos up somewhere; but such an idea did not present itself. He had gained his faithful companions, and his trusty sword was once more at his side, and thus accompanied and armed, he knew no such thing as fear. Hermos opened the gate for him, and as he passed out he fancied that he saw two men dodge behind the angle of the wall. He had advanced into the street, and was in the act of speaking with Clio, when he received an abrupt order to halt.

"Ha! Is it Theseus?"

"What!—Glaucis! Is it thou? And thou, too, Serpho?"

"Yes, noble Theseus. We gained trace of thee thus far, and here we had determined to watch. But did not Polydius mean to hold thee?"

"Not long, good Glaucis," replied our hero, lightly. "He thinks I am free by this time, for he sent six stout men to do the deed."

"The deed?"

"Aye—to set me free from the cares and turmoils of this wicked life; but I was not quite prepared for the favor, so I slew five of the fellows, and engaged the sixth to guide me to the upper regions of earth. And on my way I found these two friends—Clio and Cassander—you have heard me speak of them."

After mutual congratulations had passed between those who had thus met for the first time, Theseus asked what had been done at the royal palace.

"Alas!" replied Glaucis, "we are all lost! Your life is demanded, and Ægeus has given it up."

"Explain. Let me hear the whole story."

So Glaucis gave an account of all that had transpired, from the moment of their discovering the approach of the Cretan ships up to the discovery last made by Andromeda.

"From this it appears that I am doomed, at all events," said Theseus.

"Yes."

"And you are doomed if you do not produce the princess?"

"Yes."

"Good Glaucis, I must see Ariadne."

"I know not where she is."

"But Andromeda knows?"

"Yes."

"Then let us seek her."

"She may be with the princess now; but we will go to her dwelling and see."

At this point Clio suggested the propriety of looking after Orestes; but Theseus would not listen. He must see Ariadne first.

"Let us seek Andromeda now," he said, "and when I have conferred with the princess, then will I seek the true Orestes. Come, Glaucis, you must be our guide."

They had traversed some half-dozen streets, and were just entering a square beyond which lay the street in which Andromeda lived, when their steps were arrested by the appearance of a large body of soldiers directly before them. They would have turned and fled, but before they could do so they discovered that another detachment of troops was coming up the very street they had left.

"Ye gods!" gasped Serpho, almost stupefied with terror, "what shall we do? The king's troops are upon us, and we are surrounded!"

At this juncture men bearing torches came into the square, and one of the king's officers recognized Glaucis, upon which orders were given for the troops to march that way.

"Alas!" uttered Glaucis, laying his trembling hand upon our hero's arm, "this is a trap I had not foreseen. What can we do?"

"We must let them come, and take our chances," replied Theseus, coolly. "While I have life in my body, and this good sword in my hand, I have little to fear. But, I may not be recognized. Ha! who is that? By the gods, it is Hermos, whom I left in the court of Polydius' house! And thus he repays me for sparing his life. The fellow has made excellent use of his legs."

It was indeed Hermos, who had hurried by a short route to acquaint his master with what had been done; but on his way he had met the troops, and to them he told his story. Theseus had recognized him, and he, at the same moment, had recognized Theseus.

"Ha! Behold the culprit!" shouted Hermos, pointing with his finger towards our hero. "There is the man for whom the king hath offered two talents of silver!"

"Easy, easy," said Theseus, as Glaucis grasped him by the arm. "I have not yet lost my faith in the goodness of the gods."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SNARES THICKENING.

Theseus grasped his sword firmly, and set his buckler of triple-tempered steel before him; but he did not brace himself as was his wont for fierce encounter.

"Glaucis," he said, when he saw that the troops must soon be upon him, "I like not this. I cannot turn my sword against these Athenians. They are of our own blood, and do but obey the will of our king. We must avoid them. There is a gate upon our left. We can lose nothing by trying it."

The gate to which he alluded was close at hand, and set in a high brick wall. He sprang towards it and raised the latch, and it opened to his touch. His companions had heard his words, and when they saw him pass through the gate-way they speedily followed him. Theseus' first thought, when he found his friends by his side, was to secure the passage behind him. The torches

outside gave light enough by reflection to enable him to distinguish objects about him, and one of the first things that attracted his attention was a flight of stone steps leading up to the door of a house. One of these —an enormous block of hewn granite—he lifted from its place, and braced it against the gate in such a manner that no mortal power from without could open the passage without breaking the gate in pieces. And he was not a moment too soon, for hardly had he dropped the upper end of the rock against the stout framework when the leaders of the troops were demanding admittance.

Theseus promptly led the way across the court or yard in which he found himself, and coming to a gate in the rear, he opened it, and, with his companions, passed out into a narrow and deserted street. Glaucis at once assumed the part of guide, as he said he was familiar with the locality; and with the approbation of Theseus conducted them to the dwelling of a friend of his, Hippolus by name and a mason by trade, for whose discretion and fidelity Glaucis said he would vouch with absolute certainty. They found Hippolus at home, and received a hearty welcome to his abode. Glaucis told the sturdy mason who Theseus and his friends were, and then (leaving Theseus to tell the story of his wonderful adventures to Clio, Cassander and the host, while they all refreshed themselves with homely fare), he and Serpho left in search of Andromeda. By the time Theseus had concluded his narrative, Glaucis returned with Andromeda, who at once conducted Theseus to the old cobbler's house where Ariadne was still concealed.

The meeting of the lovers was rapturous, and they spent nearly the whole night in sweet converse. At last Ariadne retired, and Theseus, too, sought repose. Late the next morning Clio came to him, with a dis-

turbed air, and said he had a message from Glaucis, and that message was that Theseus should instantly flee, with Ariadne, from Athens, else their doom would soon be sealed. On being interrogated, Clio refused to say aught concerning the reason of this message; but Theseus seeing there were matters of importance connected with it, ordered his follower to tell him the whole truth, in such a tone and manner that Clio did not dare to refuse. The facts were these: Glaucis, and all the other youths, and the maidens, whom Theseus had rescued from the Cretan Labyrinth, had been arrested and cast into prison, and would be put to death the next morning unless their deliverer should be found and given up to Minos by that time; and they had made Clio solemnly promise not to tell Theseus these facts, lest his noble devotion should impel him to sacrifice himself in their behalf.

Theseus at once resolved to deliver himself up, and calling Ariadne, tenderly stated the situation of affairs and his determination, to her. She turned deadly pale, and there was a mighty struggle in her bosom; but she was equal to the grand emergency and yielded to her heroic lover's will. After taking a tender leave of each other, Theseus departed on his sublime mission, Ariadne calling upon all the gods to bless and aid him.

Naxos was chief of the royal troops, and to that officer was Theseus directed to deliver himself.

Now this Naxos was uncle to Glaucis, and when he saw Theseus come to offer himself a second time for the redemption of the youths and maidens, his heart went forth in love and admiration to the heroic youth, and he could not help shedding tears when he thought of the cruel fate that awaited him, and at Theseus' request, our hero was permitted to retain his arms; and in this condition he was conducted away to the prison,

by the chief, where a double iron door was closed upon him.

After this Naxos repaired to the royal apartment, where he found the three kings together, with some of their principal attendants ; and when he had told what had happened, all were struck with astonishment.

" How say you, Naxos," cried Ægeus ; " did he give himself up voluntarily ?"

" He did, sire."

" By the gods, it seems a pity to slay so noble a youth !"

" Ah, my brother," demanded Minos, " do you relent ?"

" No, no, Minos. It shall be as I have promised. The life of Theseus is yours. Take it when you will."

" I will have my daughter first. She shall see him die !"

* * * * * *

When the prison doors were opened which had been closed upon Glaucis and his companions, and they were led forth into the light, they did not experience joy or satisfaction. When they knew that Theseus had voluntarily given himself up for their second redemption they breathed his name as they would have breathed the name of a god.

But they were not yet free. They might go forth from the prison, and from the palace ; but if the princess of Crete were not delivered up before the setting of the sun the fatal doom awaited them.

Media, the queen, was not idle during all this time. Her perceptions were quick, and it needed not the aid of sorcery to assure her that Andromeda knew where the princess of Crete had found shelter. So, when she left the council of the kings, she called to her aid servants whom she could trust, and set them upon the tracks of those whom she wished to follow. In this way she dis-

covered the abode of the old cobbler, and also the dwelling of Hippolus. She was in her closet when Theseus arrived at the palace to deliver himself up, and while the populace were thronging the court, one of her messengers appeared before her.

"Ah, Alpheus, what news bring you now?"

"Ariadne is beneath the roof of the old cobbler," said the messenger. "I saw Theseus go in there last night, conducted by the maiden Andromeda; and I saw him come forth this morning."

"Enough, Alpheus. Let the house of that cobbler be searched; and if the princess is found; see that she is brought at once to the palace. Here—take this ring—show it to the officers of the guard, and they will obey you."

Alpheus took the ring, and having placed it upon his finger, he bowed and withdrew.

While these things were going on at the palace, Ariadne was suffering much beneath the roof of Andros. She paced uneasily to and fro, or she sat alone, with her face buried in her hands, and her attendants could give her no comfort. She had heard from Andromeda's lips words that troubled her—words that had not at first attracted her attention, but which, when recalled, came with weighty meaning.

"I know," she said, in answer to some remark of Clio's, "that our dear friends will not be free from danger because of the voluntary surrendering of Theseus. They will be held as hostages for my presence at the royal palace."

While they were conversing, there came the sound of disturbance from without, and presently the old cobbler made his appearance in a state of intense excitement, and a heavy tramp was heard in the narrow court, and before he could have spoken many words,

half a dozen men entered the apartment. Clio sprang before the princess with his drawn sword in his hand, but she gently drew him back.

"Let us hear what these gentlemen have to say."

Clio wondered how the lady could be so calm. He moved back at her bidding, but he did not immediately sheathe his sword.

Alpheus, the servant of Media, led the soldiers, and he it was who demanded to know if the princess of Crete was present.

"I am the daughter of Minos," said our heroine. There was a quivering of her lips ; and the clasping of her hands showed that she was struggling to compose herself.

"Fair lady," pursued Alpheus, speaking with more kindness than was his wont, for the transcendent loveliness of the damsel had made a deep impression upon him. "I am commanded to conduct you to the royal palace. I pray you to bear in mind that I am but a servant of the king, and that this business is none of mine."

"My lady," spoke Clio, who had not yet put up his sword, "my life is yours."

"Good Clio, I fear me that your love cannot aid me. Let there be no violence." Then turning to the officer, Ariadne continued :

"The noblest hero of Attica is already a prisoner at the palace ?"

"If you speak of Theseus, fair lady, he is."

"And have the youths and maidens been set free ?"

"Only for the time. At the setting of this day's sun they will all die if you be not delivered up."

"Then I have no choice." As the princess thus spoke she grew very pale, but she was firm and unshaken. "I will accompany you to the royal palace, sir."

Clio turned away with a heavy groan, and Thalia wept with bitterest grief. But they could offer no advice—no comfort. They knew that there were many soldiers without, and that forcible resistance would only make matters worse.

Alpheus left the apartment to make preparations for conducting the princess, and when he returned he found her ready to accompany him. She bade the old cobbler and his wife an affectionate farewell, and then she turned to Clio, who stood apart, with his arms folded upon his bosom and his head bowed.

"Sir," she said, speaking to the officer, "I crave the privilege of a few words with this man. He has been my friend and I may never see him again."

Alpheus bowed in token of consent, and Ariadne went to Clio's side and laid her hand upon his arm.

"Good Clio, I must go. Your master and myself must both be in the hands of our enemies. Yet I wot that there be many in Athens who would befriend us."

"I am sure of it," returned Clio, following the example of the lady, and speaking in a low tone.

"When I am gone you will be free. What will you do?"

The stout armorer gazed eagerly into Ariadne's face, and, as he caught her meaning, his eyes gleamed with new light.

"I understand you," he said, trembling beneath the weight of the thought. "I am a native of Athens, and I know somewhat of the temper of the people. I will mingle with them, and find how far a sense of honor and justice can influence them."

After this the princess went with Alpheus into the court, where she found a covered chair ready for her. She and Thalia both took their seats, and when the curtains had been securely drawn, four stout

men took the burden upon their shoulders and bore it away.

When King Minos received information that his daughter was coming, he directed that she should be brought directly to his presence, and that none others should come in with her.

Minos was alone in an apartment which had been given up for his use, and when his daughter was led into his presence he gazed upon her with a look which would have stricken any other subject with mortal terror; but Ariadne was not in the mood to be frightened. The greatest grief earth could yield would be hers in the loss of Theseus, so she feared nothing more that her father could do. She had called upon the gods for aid, and death had no terrors for her. She knew her father well enough to know that no prayers in her lover's behalf would be availing; but, on the contrary, that they would only add to the wrath already kindled against her; so she bowed her head, resolved to trust in heaven and to be prepared for the worst.

"Unnatural child," said Minos, "thy course hath been most unseemly and sinful; and were it not that I had pledged thee to Serapis, thy life should pay the penalty of thy crime."

"Sire," replied the maiden, raising her head and gazing calmly into her father's face, "thy words of threat have no new terrors for me. I would rather die than be the wife of Serapis."

"Then, by the gods," cried the Cretan King, "I shall have some satisfaction for thy wrong-doing, for the wife of Serapis thou shalt be before our ships leave this land. I have a sore punishment in store for thee, and when that hath been inflicted, the King of Egypt may take thee. I think thou lovest Theseus. Now mark me: This very day Theseus dies! By all the laws of earth

his life is forfeited, and he shall lose it. Stop,—wait until you hear all. Not only shall he die, but you shall witness his death. I have spoken."

Ariadne had not been prepared for this, and so suddenly and so heavily came the announcement upon her, that she swooned away, and sank senseless upon the pavement of the chamber. When she came to herself she was in a strange apartment, and strange faces were about her. She asked for Thalia.

"Thalia cannot come," replied one of the women. "It is the order of the king, your father, that we attend you."

"Send Thalia to me."

"Sweet lady, it cannot be. Make known your wants to us, and we will serve you."

The princess raised herself upon her elbow, and seemed for a time to be collecting her thoughts.

"What is the hour?" she at length asked.

She was informed that it was an hour past noon.

"Know ye anything concerning the youth, Glaucis, and his companions?"

"Yes, lady. They have been set free to go whither they please."

"The gods be thanked for that!"

And with this ejaculation the princess sank back, and again closed her eyes.

In the meantime Clio had not been idle. Assuming the garb of a peasant he went forth and found Cassander, and then made his way to the square in front of the royal palace, where he had the good fortune to meet Glaucis and his companions, as they came forth from their prison. To Glaucis Clio told his business, but the youth shook his head mournfully.

"Alas, good Clio, there are three kings against us."

"I know," said Clio: "but suppose my master should

break from his guards, and gain the streets. Oh, you know not his prodigious strength. If he should do this, might not the people rise in his behalf ?"

"Ah, Clio, you are greatly at fault. Theseus will not break away from the guard—he will not try to escape. He knows that upon his disappearance we should be again holden. By his own noble spirit hath the cruel king a firm hold upon him."

Clio groaned aloud, for he felt the force of Glaucis' reasoning.

While they were thus conversing a messenger was seen coming from the direction of the southern gate in great haste, his face covered with sweat and his garments with dust.

"Stop me not," he said, as Glaucis hailed him. "A ship has arrived from Trœzene, and I go to carry intelligence to the prince Polydius."

"From Trœzene !" cried Clio, springing forward and seizing the messenger by the arm. "What is the intelligence ? Who is in the ship ?"

"Æthra, the daughter of Pittheus, is in the ship."

"And why convey you the intelligence to Polydius ?"

"Because Polydius hath been upon the watch for that lady's coming, and has commanded that instant notice of her arrival should be given him."

As soon as the messenger had gone, Clio turned to Glaucis and his companions.

"Come, come," he cried, "here is work for us to do. This lady for whom the wicked prince is watching is the mother of Theseus. We must save her ; and in so doing we may save our noble master."

CHAPTER XVII.

CONCLUSION.

In the great audience-chamber of the royal palace of Athens were assembled the chief men of the kingdom, for Ægeus had determined that the things which were to be done should be public. The queen would have dispensed with a portion of the assembly, but Minos and Serapis both desired that a goodly company should be present. Upon either side of the throne of the Athenian monarch had been erected two other thrones, upon one of which sat the king of Crete, while the king of Egypt occupied the other. Media had a seat behind her husband, where also sat the prince Polydius. The princess Ariadne sat near her father; and when the people gazed upon her, and saw how pale she was, and how like the shadow of death seemed the ghastly color of her marble brow, they were moved with exceeding pity.

A large door in a far part of the chamber was opened, and Theseus, surrounded by a score of the royal guards, was conducted in. The multitude swayed to and fro in eager desire to see the hero; and even the Athenian king, who had not yet beheld him, arose from his seat that he might gain a better view.

"By the crown of Jove," he cried, when he saw the prisoner, "my eyes never rested upon a youth so comely."

"Comely and evil," said the queen, moving nearer to the side of her husband.

"Yet hath he done most gallant and noble deeds," pursued Ægeus.

"Which make his crimes the more weighty," added Media. "But, my sovereign lord, why hath he been permitted to come into the royal presence bearing arms? Is such the custom of your officers?"

The king, whose eyes were none of the best, now noticed that the prisoner wore his sword, and thereupon he called to Naxos and demanded to know why such a thing had been suffered.

"Sire," replied the chieftain, "the youth gave himself up willingly, and as he begged that his sword might not be taken from him, I yielded. He knows that the lives of those companions whom he loves are held upon his obedience, and I was assured that he would do nothing to endanger them."

At this point the officer who had brought Theseus from the dungeon knelt before the king and reported that the prisoner was present.

Then arose Ægeus a second time, and when his herald had ordered silence, he made statement of the business in hand. He told the people how the prisoner had gone to Crete, and how he had stolen away the daughter of King Minos; and this, he said, was a crime which must be punished with death. And then, putting on a royal bearing, he commanded that the prisoner should be led before him.

Naxos led the youth forward to the foot of the throne.

"Sir," spoke Ægeus, "your fate is well merited, and I must deliver thee to Minos; but first I demand of thee thy sword, for I cannot turn thee over thus armed."

"Sire," replied Theseus, "I willingly yield to thee

this blade; but in so doing I have a request to make."

He had ungirded the sword from his loins as he spoke, and extended it toward the king. Ægeus saw it and grasped it in both his hands; and as he gazed upon it his frame shook as though stricken by a thunderbolt.

"This sword is not thine," he said, scarcely able to speak plainly.

"It has been mine, sire."

"Now, by all the powers of heaven, I swear that never were made but two swords like this. One of these was mine own. Where didst thou obtain this other one?"

"That weapon, sire, was my father's. If it was not, then my mother cruelly deceived me."

Suddenly the king pointed to the prisoner's feet.

"Those golden sandals!" he said, in a hoarse whisper,— "Where got ye those?"

"I found them with the sword, sire."

"But where?—where? Answer me."

The queen placed her hand upon the king's shoulder at this point, but he shook it rudely off.

"Speak! Where got ye those things?"

"I found them in the vale of Syros, sire, beneath a massive stone, which I was forced to lift from its place. My mother went thither with me to direct my steps. Two of my stoutest companions tried in vain to raise the stone; but I was more fortunate. The weighty barrier could not resist the strength which I put forth."

"Know ye the King of Trœzene?" demanded Ægeus.

"Yes, sire. He is my grandfather. I was reared at his court."

"And thy mother," gasped the monarch.

Before Theseus could answer a messenger entered the chamber in great haste.

"How now?" cried Polydius, starting down from his place.

But the king stopped him, and the messenger approached the throne.

"Sire," spoke the newcomer, bending upon his knee, "pardon me for this unseemly haste; but a wondrous thing hath happened. Thy true queen is not dead. She is now in the palace, and would behold her husband and her son."

Media, with flashing eyes and contracted brow, sprang to the side of the king.

"How is this, my lord!" she exclaimed. "Can you allow foul work of necromancy to move you from your purpose? Away with this false messenger; and give this lying prisoner over to Minos."

"Aye, my royal brother," cried Polydius, recovering slightly from the deathly stupor which had come upon him, "listen to the queen."

"Listen to the queen," echoed Polydius' six sons.

"Stand back!" ordered the prince, seizing the messenger. "Let the doors be closed and suffer no one else to enter."

King Minos, unable to comprehend the meaning of all this, arose from his seat.

"Ægeus," he said, "I demand the prisoner at your hands. Let his head be struck off, and then you may attend to this messen g

"Aye," added Polydius, "answer Minos first."

"Answer Minos first," repeated Media.

The Athenian monarch stood for a few minutes like one bereft of sense; but soon he gathered his feeble energies again, and would have tottered down from the throne to where the prisoner stood if his brother had not held him back.

"Fool!" hissed Polydius, "would ye bring down upon

us all the combined wrath of the kings of Crete and of Egypt? Give over this prisoner, and thus fulfill thy royal pledge."

"Wait—wait one moment," begged Ægeus. "Let me see my queen."

"Good lord, I am here," said Media.

"No, no—I mean Æthra. Where is she?"

"She comes," answered Naxos, who had failed to obey the order of Polydius touching the closing of the doors.

And even while he spoke Æthra, the daughter of Pittheus, accompanied by Clio and Cassander, and by Glaucis and Serpho and Pyrgos, and by Andromeda and the other maidens, entered the chamber. The old king, when he saw her, sank back upon his throne, and would have swooned from joy had not a sudden danger startled him.

Polydius and his sons, with such followers as were in their interest, had drawn their swords; and both Minos and Serapis, with their attendants, were also upon their feet and armed.

Suddenly, as if inspired by more than mortal power, Ægeus sprang to his feet, and raised his sceptre aloft.

"Peace!" he ordered, in a tone such as he had been wont to use when younger and stronger. "Most wickedly have I been betrayed. Polydius, thou hast lied to me. Thou didst swear to me that Æthra was dead. Oh, how blind have I been! Theseus, thou art my son and my successor; and to gain the throne when I was dead hath Polydius done much mischief."

At this juncture Media hastened to the side of Minos and spoke a few hurried words in his ear, whereupon the Cretan king started forward and demanded to be heard.

"Ægeus, and you, men of Athens," he cried, "beware

how you trifle. The life of yonder prisoner is mine, and I must have it. Otherwise destruction, dire and deadly, shall fall upon all this realm."

A moment Ægeus hesitated and trembled ; but presently the old inspiration came back. With a quick movement he descended from his throne, and taking the golden crown from his head, he placed it upon the head of Theseus."

"My son, upon thy head do I place the crown of Athens, and into thy hand do I resign the sceptre. Thou art my son, and thou art henceforth king in my place."

"He speaks the truth," whispered a voice close by Theseus' side ; and upon turning he beheld his mother. "Ægeus is thy father—he is my husband."

Theseus had not been taken entirely by surprise, for from the moment of his father's recognition of the sword the truth had dawned upon him. As he felt the weight of the crown upon his brow, and grasped the sceptre in his hand, he knew that the royal place was his. Then came the assurance of his mother's words ; and on the next instant he had mounted the throne.

"Men of Athens," he cried, laying down the golden truncheon, and drawing his sword, "this bright blade, the first gift of my royal father, shall be my sceptre until Attica is free from trouble, and woe betide him who dares tempt the weight of its stroke. Naxos, I command thee to seize the prince Polydius and all his family, and bear them to the dungeons where Glaucis and his companions have been held. Away with them, for their presence pollutes the air !"

Polydius looked in vain for succor. Clio and Glaucis, with their companions, had done their work well among the soldiers and among the people ; and when the noble Theseus was crowned before them, they pressed forward to do him homage. Even those men

who had been in the service of the base prince joined the multitude ; so that when Polydius looked for help he found not a man to serve him. He was borne away —he and his sons—to the dungeons beneath the palace.

When Theseus turned to look for Media she was gone, and her attendants were sent to search for her.

During all this time Minos and Serapis sat like men in a troubled dream. Their attendants were but few, and they dared not think of open resistance in that place.

At length, when order had been restored, Theseus turned to the visiting kings. His bearing was majestic, and even Jove might have envied him that calm dignity of conscious power.

"King Minos," he said, "what demand hast thou now to make ?"

"Thus do I demand," answered Minos : "Serapis and myself will sail from Athens, and my daughter with us, and the tribute of seven youths and seven maidens shall be paid yearly to me, as hath been done heretofore."

"Listen now to me," replied Theseus : "Thyself and Serapis may depart when it pleaseth thee. Thy daughter shall elect her own course. The tribute of life shall be paid to thee no more forever."

"Then," cried the Cretan monarch, "Athens shall once more feel the curse of my legions in battle array !"

"But the princess must not be left behind," exclaimed Serapis.

"She shall not be," responded Minos.

Now for the first time since he had entered the chamber, Theseus turned and looked upon the royal maiden.

"Ariadne," he said, "my heart is already thine, and my hand is pledged to thee ; and I now offer thee the

right of a queen to my throne. As thy decision is so shall it be."

The princess, caring not for the thousand eyes that watched her movements, hastened to the side of the youthful king, and rested her head upon his bosom.

"With thee let me live—with thee let me die! Oh, send me not away!"

Minos scowled, and unseemly words fell from his lips.

"Enough of this," cried Theseus, when he saw that the Cretan King was beside himself with passion. "Naxos, conduct our royal brothers to their own apartments, and there let them be held for a week and a day. At the end of that time they shall elect their own course."

"How!" shouted Minos. "Do you dare to imprison us?"

"I shall hold both thee and Serapis for a week and a day. I have spoken, and so must it be."

Naxos moved to the place where stood the two kings, and asked them if they would accompany him.

"I go now," said Minos; "but the day of vengeance shall come."

* * * * *

And now turned Theseus to embrace his parents, and for a long time they spoke not for joy.

Æthra told him how she had been sick at Trœzene, almost to death.

Ægeus told how he had been informed of her death, and how Media had gained control over him.

And then it was understood how Polydius, scheming for the advancement of his sons, had acted a most villainous part. He had known of the departure of Theseus from Trœzene, and he set his emissaries to intercept and entrap him. By connivance with Media he had so completely gained control over the old king that

all avenues of entrance to the kingdom were held by him, and all intelligence passed through his hands. In this way had he kept from Ægeus a knowledge of Æthra's true condition, and he had furthermore planned upon the queen's arrival, to intercept and imprison her.

"But," said Ægeus, "the wicked man has been foiled, and joy is mine. Dear Theseus, it had been my purpose for many months before thy mother left me on her last visit to the court of Pittheus, to resign the sceptre into thy hands when thou couldst raise the stone beneath which I had placed my sword and sandals; and though it might appear that my purpose came near being thwarted, yet I believe the gods have never forsaken thee. So to high heaven let our thanks ascend; and let us remember, while we live, that to the powers immortal our chiefest homage is due."

Theseus would have conversed longer with his parents, but the populace was thronging the court of the palace, demanding to see the new sovereign who had done such wonderful deeds, and he was forced to go out upon the platform, but before he went he took Ariadne by the hand and led her to his mother.

"My mother," he said, "into thy keeping I give this maiden. I shall not see her again for a week and a day. Fear not, sweet love," he added, when he saw the princess tremble. "All shall yet be well."

And with this he went forth and showed himself to the people; and when the evening star arose upon the city he went to the Temple of Minerva, and made suitable offerings to the goddess.

The story of the hero's exploits upon the Corinthian Isthmus and in Crete had flown through all Attica, and all tongues were sounding the praises of the unknown benefactor; but he was not to be unknown to them a great while. On the very night of his coronation mes-

sengers, mounted upon swift horses, were sent over the land bearing the intelligence that the conqueror of Procrustes and Periphetes was the son of Ægeus, and now King of Athens.

And the kings of Attica saw that the hour had come for the establishment of a new power in Greece ; for it had been foretold that out of the loins of Ægeus should come forth a hero beneath whose sway all Attica should be joined ; and that thenceforth no foreign prince should prevail against him. They would not wait to be subdued by the Athenian king, so they came to Athens —they and their chief men—and swore allegiance to Theseus ; and before the week had passed they had gathered together all their warriors upon the plain without the city, that they might be inspected by their new sovereign. But these were not all. Pittheus came from Trœzene, with a thousand armed men ; and five other kings of Argolis, with numerous followers, came to swell the ranks of the Attic hero.

At the time appointed Theseus led Minos and Serapis forth upon the walls of his palace, and when they beheld the vast plain covered with armed men they were lost in astonishment.

"Minos," spoke the Athenian, "all the chiefs of Attica have voluntarily become my subjects, and from beyond the Sinus Saronicus six kings have come to offer me their allegiance and their swords. I bear thee no enmity ; but rather would I give thee my friendship. Give to me the hand of thy daughter, and henceforth let there be peace betwixt Crete and Athens."

This speech pleased not the King of Egypt ; but Minos saw and heard with different feelings.

"Where is my daughter?" he asked.

"She is in my mother's keeping. I have not seen her

for a week and a day. I have waited for thee to bestow her upon me."

Minos was sorry to disappoint Serapis, but his own interest, under these new circumstances, led him to choose the friendship of the youthful monarch, whose prowess had already become a wonder to the world.

And that very evening Ariadne became the wife of Theseus; and among the most honored of the guests were those youths and maidens who had borne the hero company in Crete.

A week and a day had been spent in search after Media the sorceress; but she could not be found in Athens. It turned out in the end, however, that she had found shelter on board one of the ships of Serapis; and when that dusky monarch returned she used her arts to such good purpose that he gave her the place which he had meant for Ariadne, and bore her to Egypt as his queen.

Polydius died in prison, unwept and unhonored. His six sons were liberated; and seeing that the mighty power of Theseus entirely overshadowed them, they were content to rest upon such bounty as they could gain, yielding submission because they could do no better.

* * * * *

"Happy, happy Ariadne!" murmured the maiden Andromeda, as the youthful queen rested upon her arm.

Theseus had just left them, leading his aged father by the hand.

"Aye," answered Ariadne, her beautiful face radiant with joy; "through much tribulation the prize hath been won. Oh, it is sweet to obey the will of heaven when the measure of life is thus filled with blessing."

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